Enid Blyton's
Best Ever
story book
PURNELL

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Best Ever story book

Designer: Ruth Hall
Cover artwork: Susan Rowe
Illustrators: Jerry Malone
Abigail Pizer
Ann Blockley

Purnell

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The Flyaway Cottage

SHEILA and Harry looked out of the nursery window. It was pouring with rain, and they had to go across the fields to fetch the eggs from the farm.

"What a nuisance!" said Harry. "It's such a long way down the road and over the hill to the farm when it's raining."

"Well, let's go the short cut through the woods," said Sheila. "We can put on our big rubber boots and our macks and sou'-westers, and we shall be sheltered from the wind if we walk through the wood. It won't take us very long."

So they put on their rubber boots, and their mackintoshes and oilskin hats. They took the basket for the eggs, called good-bye to their mother and set out. It *was* raining hard! There were big puddles everywhere, and the rain splashed into them and made them bigger still! The wind blew hard too, and altogether it was a very stormy, windy day.

Soon the two children came to the woods. They were glad to get among trees, for they were more sheltered then. They walked through the dripping trees, over the soaking grass. Then suddenly there came such a gale blustering through the woods that the children were quite frightened.

"I hope the wind won't blow any trees down on us," said Sheila, looking round at the trees bent almost double in the gale. "I wish there was somewhere for us to shelter in just till this storm is over, Harry. Is there any cottage near that we could go to?"

"No," said Harry. "I've never seen any cottage here at all."

Just as he spoke, Sheila cried out in surprise and pointed to the left.

" Look, Harry! There's the funniest little cottage I've ever seen. What are those things growing out of each side of it? "

It certainly was a strange cottage. Jutting out at each side of it were big feathery wings. They were perfectly still, and drooped a little in the rain. The cottage was very small, and had a yellow front door with one chimney that twisted here and there in the wind.

" It's the funniest cottage I've ever seen," said Harry. " I don't know whether to go to it or not. It looks queer to me. Goodness knows who might live there—a witch perhaps, or an enchanter. It's just the sort of cottage you see in a book."

The two children stood looking at it, and the rain fell more and more heavily on them.

" It's raining cats and dogs," said Harry, and my goodness me, just as he said that, his words came true! It really *did* begin to rain cats and dogs! A large black kitten fell on Sheila's head, and a little white dog fell down by Harry. Then two tabby cats tumbled near Sheila and three collies around Harry. The children stood looking at them in amazement. Then they looked up at the sky. It was full of cats and dogs, all falling to earth like rain!

"Quick! Run to the cottage!" said Harry, in a fright. "We don't want hundreds of dogs and cats on our heads! It must be a very bad storm if it rains cats and dogs! "

So they ran through the falling cats and dogs to the queer little cottage. Sheila thought she saw its wings move a little as they came near. A black cat fell on to her shoulder and made her squeal. She rushed to the cottage door and turned the handle. She and Harry ran inside and slammed the door behind them.

A smell of new made cakes was in the cottage. The children gazed around the room they were in. A small woman with green wings growing out of her shoulders looked round at them from the fireplace.

" Now then, now then, what do you mean by rushing in like that without so much as a knock at the door or a ring? " she said grumpily. " Here I've got my oven door open and my cakes are baking as well, and you come and make a draught like that. It's enough to make them all go flat, so it is."

The children were so surprised to see such a funny person that they couldn't speak. The little woman was fat and round and she wore a sort of sun-bonnet on her head. Her cheeks were hot from the fire, and she shut her oven door with a slam.

" Well? " she said. " Haven't you a tongue in your heads, either of you? What do you want? Have you come to buy any of my cakes? "

" No," said Harry. "We didn't know you sold them. Are you a fairy? "

" I'm a pixie woman," said the funny little person, taking off her spectacles and polishing them on her big white apron. " I'm the famous Mother Mickle-Muckle, whose cakes are bought for all the best parties in Fairyland and Witchland. Haven't you ever heard of me? "

" No," said Sheila, feeling rather excited to see a real pixie person. " I'm so sorry if our opening the door has spoilt your cakes. But, you see, it's raining cats and dogs outside and we had to run for shelter."

"Cats and dogs!" said the pixie woman in surprise. "Nonsense!"

Just as she spoke a large brown and white dog fell down the chimney into the fire. It jumped out at once and ran barking round the kitchen. Mother Mickle-Muckle picked up a frying-pan and ran after it.

"Get out, you clumsy creature!" she said. "I won't have animals in my nice clean kitchen!"

She opened the door and the dog ran out into the wood. But no sooner had the pixie woman shut it than two big cats fell down her chimney, and when they had jumped out on the hearth rug they began to fight, spitting and snarling at one another in a spiteful manner. The pixie picked up a rolling-pin and rushed angrily at the cats.

They flew at her and scratched her on the hand. Then out of the window they jumped, still hissing at one another.

"Look at that now!" said Mother Mickle-Muckle, showing her hand to the children. "I won't stay here a minute longer! I hate dogs and cats to fall down my chimney! Cottage, fly to Topsy-Turvy Land!"

Before the children could say a word the cottage spread its two feathery wings and flew up into the air! Yes, it really did! Sheila rushed to a window and she saw its wings beating the air like a bird's, and, as she watched, the trees were left behind and the cottage rose high into the air.

"Ooh!" cried Sheila in the greatest astonishment. "The cottage is flying away!"

"Of course," said the pixie, busy rolling out some pastry on the kitchen table. "It's Fly-Away Cottage, didn't you know that? It's famous all over the world."

" Well, *I've* never heard of it," said Sheila. " Have you, Harry ? "

" Never," said Harry, looking in wonder out of the window, gazing at fields and woods below them.

" Then you are two silly, ignorant children," said Mother Mickle-Muckle quite crossly. " I don't know where you go to school, if they don't teach you things like that."

" I wish we *were* taught things like that! " said Sheila. " It would be much more exciting to learn about this Fly-Away Cottage and you, than about bays and rivers."

Mother Mickle-Muckle was pleased. She took a plate of chocolate buns from the cupboard and put them down in front of the children.

" You can each have two," she said. " We shan't arrive at Topsy-Turvy Land for another hour or two. Take off your coats and hats and sit down."

" Whatever will mother say if we don't go back to dinner! " said Harry. " I don't think we ought to go to Topsy-Turvy Land, Mother Mickle-Muckle, though I'd love to."

" You'll *have* to go," said the pixie, popping another tin of cakes into the oven. " I am taking some cakes to the Big Little Goblin for his party this afternoon and he would turn me into a biscuit or an ice-cream if I were late."

" Big Little Goblin! " said Sheila in surprise. " Nobody can be big and little, too."

" Oh, can't they? " said Mother Mickle-Muckle, rolling out some more dough. " Well, let me tell you, my clever little girl, that the Big Little Goblin is little in height but very big in width. That is, he

is very short and very fat, and he is the King of Topsy-Turvy Land because he is the stupidest person there."

" Then why do they make him King ? " asked Harry, astonished.

" Oh, everything is upside-down in Topsy-Turvy Land," said the pixie. " The stupidest is King and the cleverest is a beggar. Now just sit down and keep quiet whilst I decorate these cakes. We'll be passing over the sea in a little while, and you can watch the ships."

It was strange to be in a little cottage flying high above the clouds. The two children looked out of the windows and saw the ships on the sea, and then at last they were over land again. The cottage swooped down and landed with a bump on a little hill. The children were thrown off their feet, but Mother Mickle-Muckle didn't seem to mind.

She put some cakes into a basket and opened the door. " Come along," she said.

The children followed her—and how surprised they were to see the land they had come to. Everything was Topsy-Turvy!

The houses stood on their chimneys, and the people had to have ladders to get up to their front doors. It was really most peculiar. The people walked the right way up but they all wore a large boot or shoe on their heads instead of a hat. Sheila and Harry wanted to laugh whenever they met anyone.

The people were mostly small and fat, and they all had funny little button noses and pointed ears. They wore their coats back to front and they talked very loudly in high voices.

The Big Little Goblin lived in a small cottage and didn't look a bit like a king. He wore a red button-boot on his head, and round one of his legs was a golden crown. He took the basket of cakes from Mother Mickle-Muckle and peered at them to see if they were all right.

" He's a funny sort of king," said Sheila, when they came out of the cottage. " I should have thought he would have lived in that big palace over there." She pointed to a high, shining palace a little way off.

" Oh, that's where the cleverest man lives, the beggar I told you of," said the pixie woman. " This is Topsy-Turvy Land, remember. Beggars live in palaces and kings live in cottages."

Sheila stopped to watch a Topsy-Turvy Man walk up the ladder to his upside-down front door. She thought it must be very funny to walk on ceilings and see your fire burning upside-down.

" Come along, come along," said Mother Mickle-Muckle impatiently. " I must get to Giant Too-Tall's before one o'clock with a jam roll."

They hurried back to where the Fly-Away Cottage was waiting for them. It was waving its feathery wings in the air, and was so anxious to be away that it rose up in the air almost before Sheila had gone through

the door. She nearly fell out as it rose with a jerk, and Harry just caught her in time and pulled her into the kitchen.

" We'd better have our dinner whilst the cottage is flying to Giant Too-Tall's," said the pixie woman, and she set the table with a white cloth. For their dinner she gave them hot ginger buns, cherry pie and cheese biscuits straight from the oven. They liked it very much. The cottage flew steadily through the air whilst they ate, and when next the children looked out of the window they saw a big black cloud in front of them with something glittering in the middle of it.

" There's a castle right in the middle of the cloud! " said Sheila in surprise. " Goodness, think of that! "

Sure enough, there was! The cottage flew into the thick cloud and set itself down in the castle yard. The pixie woman took a small jam roll out of the oven.

" Is that for a giant? " asked Harry, laughing. " My goodness, he must be a small giant! "

" You wait and see! " said Mother Mickle-Muckle, and she opened the door of her cottage.

" Coo-ee! " she called, in a high, bird-like voice. " Coo-ee! "

The door of the great castle opened and out came a most enormously tall giant with eyes as big as a dinner-plate. Sheila and Harry felt quite frightened and ran back into the cottage.

" Have you brought my jam roll ? " called a thundering voice and the cottage shook from top to bottom.

" Yes, come and get it," answered the pixie woman and she held out the jam roll she had made. The children saw a big hand come down to

get it and dear me, what a very peculiar thing happened! As soon as the jam roll touched the giant's hand, it suddenly grew ten times as large, and was the biggest jam roll the children had ever seen in their lives!

" Thanks," said the giant's booming voice, and he gave the pixie woman a shilling as large as a saucer. But as soon as it touched her hand it became small, and she slipped it in her pocket.

" Have you got visitors in your Fly-Away Cottage? " suddenly asked the giant and he bent down and looked through one of the windows. " Ho, children! Come along with me and play with my daughter! "

" Good gracious me, no! " cried the pixie woman. " She would think they were dolls and would break them in a trice."

" You give them to *me*! " said the giant and he tried to open the window to get at the children. But the pixie woman slapped his hand smartly with her rolling-pin so that he cried out in pain, and she called out: " Fly away, cottage, to the cave of the dwarf! "

The cottage at once spread its wings and left the black cloud with its great castle towering in the midst. It flew into the blue sky, and the two children were delighted to leave the tall giant behind.

The cottage flew lazily along, and the pixie woman looked at the clock. It said three o'clock. She tapped sharply on the wall of the cottage and cried: "Now then, Fly-Away Cottage, hurry up or we shan't be at the dwarf's cave in time for tea. He must have his cherry buns for it's his birthday party."

The cottage began to flap its wings so fast that it jerked about and the children sat down suddenly on the floor. Cups flew off the dresser and a chair fell on to the pixie woman's toe so that she cried out in pain.

"Now, now," she shouted, banging the cottage wall with her rolling-pin, "what are you thinking of, cottage, to fly so fast? Be sensible. We don't want to be jerked out of the windows."

The cottage slowed down a little and the room inside became steadier. The children looked out of the windows. They were passing over the sea again, but it was a very queer sea, for it was bright yellow, streaked with pink.

Time went on and soon the hands of the clock pointed to twenty to four. A mountain came in sight, standing right up in the middle of the yellow sea, just like a pointed island. The cottage flew to it and perched on the very top. The children wondered if it would slide down—and no sooner did they wonder it than the cottage *did* slide down! What a funny feeling it was—just like going down a very swift lift!

Bump! The cottage reached the bottom and the children fell over again. When they picked themselves up they saw the pixie woman going out of the door with a basket of cherry buns.

"Don't come with me," she said. "The Tick-Tock Dwarf is bad-tempered and might want to keep you for servants. Stay here."

So the children stayed where they were, and peeped out of the door. Sheila saw a strange-looking flower growing not far off and ran out to get it. As she stooped to pick it she heard a voice say: " Ha! Here are some children! Let's take them prisoners! "

She looked up and saw a tiny dwarf staring at her, and not far away were about a dozen others like him. They all had long beards reaching to the ground, and wore long-pointed shoes on their big feet. Sheila was frightened and she ran back to the cottage and slammed the door, hoping that the pixie woman would return very soon.

But she didn't come. The dwarfs surrounded the cottage and came closer and closer. Harry locked the door and fastened all the windows.

" I believe there's a dwarf coming down the chimney! " he said suddenly, and sure enough, there was!

" They'll capture us! " said Sheila, looking ready to cry. Harry peeped out of the window to see if the pixie woman was coming but there was no sign of her.

So in despair he cried out to the cottage: " Fly-Away Cottage, please fly away from here and take us home! "

At once, the cottage spread its wings and rose into the air! The children were so glad. The dwarf who was climbing down the chimney got out again in a great hurry and jumped to the ground just in time. The cottage flew over the yellow and red sea at a great pace. Sheila and Harry were

glad to leave the dwarf's island but they were worried about the pixie woman.

What would she do? Would she have to live on the island all her life?

Suddenly they heard a cross voice shouting. They looked out of the window. Behind them flew the pixie woman trying her hardest to keep up with the cottage.

" Open the door and let me in! " she shouted. " You stupid, silly children, open the door! "

They opened the door, and Mother Mickle-Muckle flew in. She sat down by the fire and panted. She was very cross with them.

" Flying off with my cottage like that! " she said. " I never heard of such a thing! I shall take you both straight back home. I really don't know what you'll do next! "

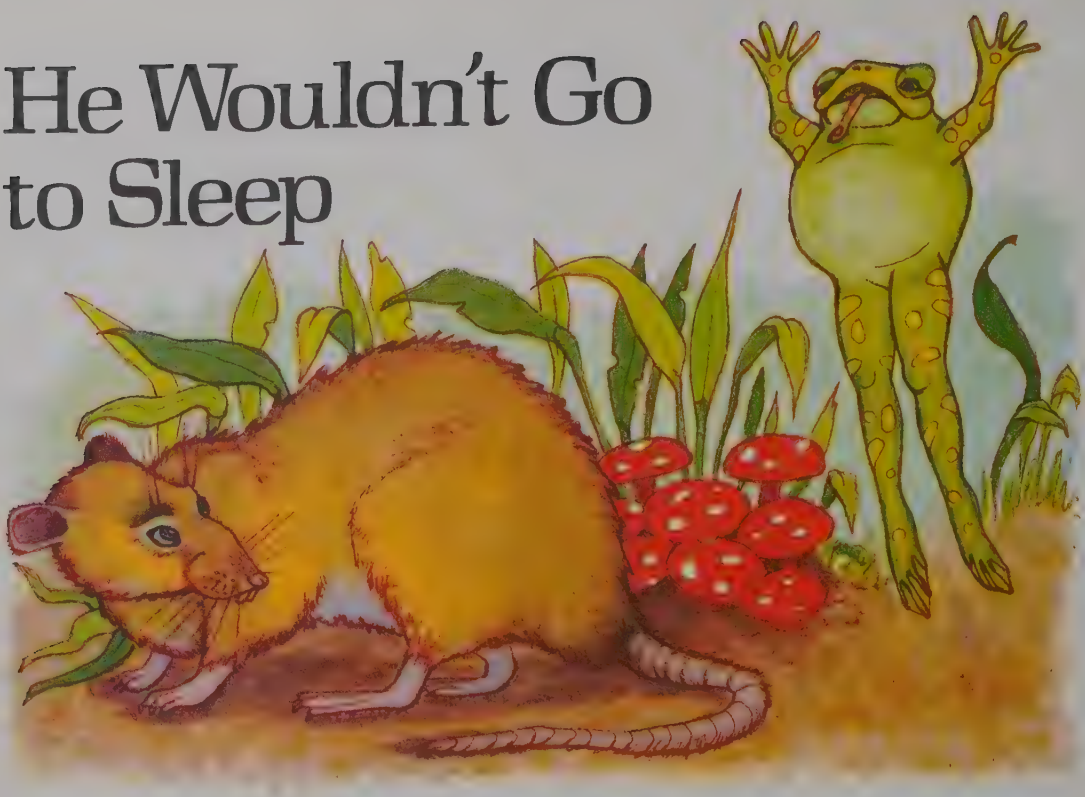
The children were *so* glad to be flying home! They had had quite enough adventures for one day. Just as the clock hands pointed to twenty past four the cottage flew downwards, and the children saw that they were in their very own garden! How glad they were! It had stopped raining, and the sun was shining. They took up their mackintoshes and hats and stepped out of the strange Fly-Away Cottage.

" Good-bye, Mother Mickle-Muckle," they said. " Thank you for our nice dinner and all the adventures."

" You're welcome to them," said the little pixie woman, putting another tin of cakes into her oven and slamming the door. " Come and see me again when it's raining cats and dogs!"

Off they ran and the last they saw of the Fly-Away Cottage was a speck that looked like a kite in the air as the cottage flapped away to the west where the sun was sinking slowly. " I *do* hope we see it again if ever it rains cats and dogs," said Sheila. I'd like to, too, wouldn't you?

He Wouldn't Go to Sleep



LEAPER the frog was a fine fellow. He was five years old, so he was quite grown-up, and felt very proud of himself indeed.

" I am the biggest frog in the ditch! " he said to himself. " I have the brightest green coat, and I am sure that no other frog has legs as long as mine. I can leap almost to the top of the hedge! "

He couldn't really—but certainly he could jump very high, for a frog. Once when a rat was after him, Leaper jumped so high that the rat was afraid and ran away!

Leaper was clever at catching flies, too. He flicked out his tongue, which had a sticky tip, and caught hundreds of flies each summer.

Once a sparrow saw him catching fly after fly, and flew down beside him.

" How do you catch flies so easily? " asked the sparrow. " I would like to take a lesson from you. I cannot catch nearly so many as you, and I have four baby sparrows to feed. Teach me how you do it, frog."

" Well, it's quite easy," said Leaper. " Look—I fling my tongue like this—hit the fly—and bring it back into my mouth on the tip of my tongue."

" Yes, but how do you manage to fling your tongue out so far? " asked the sparrow. " Mine will only go out a tiny way."

" Ah, but I have my tongue fastened to the *front* of my mouth, not to the back," said Leaper proudly. " You see, I can put it out much farther then. Look! "

He flung out his tongue again and hit the sparrow on the beak with it.

" Good gracious! " said the sparrow, in surprise. " Don't do that. I'm afraid, Leaper, that I'll never be able to catch as many flies as you, because my tongue is fastened to the back of my mouth, just as the tongues of children are. Well, well—you are very lucky, I think."

Leaper had a lovely summer. It was rather rainy, and he liked that. His ditch was damp and cool. Flies buzzed everywhere, especially the big blue-bottles. Leaper only had to sit under a dock-leaf and wait for the flies to perch nearby—then out would go his tongue, and fly after fly would disappear!

Leaper grew fat. He found a great many green caterpillars and ate those too. He found a family of earwigs and had them for his dinner. He discovered where the slugs came out to feast after a rain-shower, and he ate so many that he really couldn't manage even one more.

Oh yes, Leaper had a marvellous time, and enjoyed his life very much. He knew the mice that ran along the ditch. He often talked with the slow, wise old toad who lived under a big stone on the bank. He chatted to the

sparrows and said how-do-you-do to the hedgehog that sometimes came shuffling by at night.

The summer passed. The autumn came, and acorns tumbled down in the wood. Blackberries grew fat and juicy on the hedges, and children came to pick them.

The grass snake came wriggling along the bottom of the ditch, and Leaper got under a stone at once. The snake sometimes made a meal of a fat frog.

" I can see you! " called the snake. " But you needn't worry. I'm off to sleep the weeks away now! "

" Silly fellow! " said Leaper, as he watched the snake wriggling away. " Going off to sleep in a hollow tree whilst there is so much food to eat! "

It was a warm autumn. Flies still buzzed around, and Leaper had plenty to eat. But the nights were cold. The hedgehog came to say good-bye.

" I have a cosy hole in the bank," he told Leaper. " I have taken dead leaves and moss into it in my mouth, and now I am going to curl up there, warm and snug, and sleep the winter away."

" Silly creature! " thought Leaper. " What is this idea of sleeping the winter away? I did it for four winters—but now that I am full-grown I shall do as I please. I shall spend the winter awake—and eat all the flies there are! There will be no one to share them with, so I shall have more than ever."

The dormouse hurried along the ditch, fat and brown. " Good-bye, Leaper!" he cried. " I am fat and well, and I am going to curl myself up at the bottom of the hedgerow roots and go to sleep, now that the winter is nearly here. Why don't you go to the pond as the other frogs do? "

" Because I am not going to go to sleep this winter," said Leaper grandly. " It is a waste of time. I shall stay awake and eat everything by myself! "

" How foolish you are! " said the dormouse, and ran down a hole

to its hiding-place under the roots. He curled himself up, put his nose into his paws, and slept.

The old toad called to Leaper.

"Leaper! Go to the pond and settle yourself in the mud at the bottom to sleep! It is time."

"I'm not going to," said Leaper. "I'm going to keep awake for a change! Why don't you keep awake too, old toad?"

"I am wise enough to know what is good for me," said the toad, and he blinked sleepily. "Good-night! I am going to sleep now. Do not wake me until the spring days are here."

"Foolish toad!" said Leaper, and he laughed croakily. "Nobody is brave enough to keep awake. Well—I will be the first frog to keep awake in the winter. How I shall laugh at all the other creatures when they awake thin and sleepy in the spring and see me here, fat and jolly!"

One by one all the creatures disappeared. The bats went. The lizards were nowhere to be seen. The newts had gone. Every frog was at the bottom of the pond, sleeping tight. The toads were under damp stones. The dormice had gone, and the snakes no longer glided along the bottom of the ditch.

Only the rabbits came out to play, and the stoats and weasels hunted them. And sometimes the big rat came slinking along the hedgerow to see what he could find. The frog hid then.

At first there were many flies for him and even a caterpillar or two. The flies came to feast on the ivy-flowers that blossomed late on the hedge above. Leaper caught a great many. He liked the warm autumn sunshine—but at night the frost came and put a white covering on the grass.

Then suddenly the flies all went! There was a very hard frost one night—and every fly was killed. Even the spiders now hid themselves away in cracks and corners. Not one was to be seen.

Leaper grew thin. For five days he did not catch a single fly, nor did he find any grub or spider. He began to be worried.

" Perhaps after all it is a wise thing to sleep in the winter," he thought. " I wish now that I had gone down to the bottom of the pond with the others. What am I going to do if no more flies come? "

No more flies arrived. They were all dead. A whole week more went by, and now Leaper was so thin that he looked half his size.

" I shall go to the pond and swim down to the mud," he thought at last. "The others will laugh at me, but I can't help it. I shall die of hunger and cold if I stay up here."

So he began to leap away from the ditch towards the pond. He could not leap as high as usual because he was not so fat and strong. But at last he reached the pond.

And then Leaper stared in astonishment. Something had happened to the pond! It was no longer water. He could not slip into it and swim. It was hard, like the earth. What could have happened?

Leaper hopped on to the ice—for the pond had frozen, of course! But no matter how he tried he could not get through the ice to the mud at the bottom of the pond. So he hopped off again and leapt to another pond he knew. But that was the same! It was quite hard and cold.

" This is most extraordinary," said poor Leaper. " Why did nobody tell me that ponds went hard in the winter? I never knew that before. And I didn't know either that flies disappeared in the cold weather. Dear, dear —I thought I was so clever and wise and strong—and now I find that I know hardly anything! The ones I thought so foolish are the wise ones! "

He hopped away from the ponds. He was frightened, hungry, cold, and sad. He knew he would soon die—but it was his own fault.

And then Billy, the spaniel-dog, saw him! Billy was surprised. He was old enough to know that no frogs were about in the winter. He gently picked Leaper up in his mouth and trotted home with him.

Billy had been taught not to hurt anything he picked up, so when he put Leaper down at the feet of his little mistress, the frog was not hurt at all.

Nora, Billy's mistress, was most astonished to see the frog. " Mummy, Mummy! " she called. " Come and see what Billy has brought me—a frog, in the middle of winter! "

Mummy was astonished too. She picked up the thin frog and looked at him. " Poor thing," she said, " he is half dead. Put him into your aquarium, Nora—maybe he will sink to the bottom and sleep in the sand there."

So Leaper was put into Nora's aquarium—and he was sensible enough to swim to the bottom and bury himself in the sand there. He slept at once—and there he still sleeps, for I saw him yesterday.

Wasn't it a lucky thing for him that Billy the spaniel found him? I don't think he will be quite so proud or quite so foolish next winter, do you?

The Enchanted Pencil

Nobody liked Nippy very much. He was a small soft-footed goblin, and you couldn't leave anything about when he was near, in case he slipped away with it.

"Now where's my bag of groceries gone?" Dame Toddle would say. "I just put it down on that chair for a moment—and then I look round, and it's gone!"

So it had—and Nippy had gone with it. Nothing was safe near him, not even a box of matches. Into Nippy's pocket it would go. He had gone off with Mr. Shabby's library book, Mother Rose's gloves, and a bag of sweets belonging to Tiny, the pixie. Nobody ever saw him take anything —but everybody knew!

"I can't go after him unless I have proof," said Mr. Plod the policeman. "Can't accuse anyone without proof, you know. All I can say is—be careful, all of you, and don't leave your things about!"

"We *don't* leave them about—we only put them down for a moment," said Dame Toddle. "I put my bag of groceries down to get out my purse, that's all—and, lo and behold, it disappears in a trice!"

"We'll have to chain all our belongings to us," said Mother Rose, gloomily. "What he wants with my gloves I don't know. They wouldn't fit his big, bony hands."

When Dame Quick-Eye came to stay with Mother Rose, she heard all about Nippy. " And really I don't know *what* we can do about him," said Mother Rose. "He's quite impossible."

"Oh, I think I can manage to deal with him for you," said Dame Quick-Eye. "You leave it to me."

"Can you *really*?" said Mother Rose. "That would be marvellous."

Dame Quick-Eye went and rummaged in her bag upstairs. She took out a little narrow box, rather long. In it was a pencil—a most peculiar one!

It was green and gold, and had a curious sharp point at the bottom of it, like the sting of an insect. When it wrote the writing was beautiful —sharp, strong and black. It was a very smart pencil indeed.

"Ah, there you are, my little magic pencil," said Dame Quick-Eye, pleased. "I'm glad I brought you with me. Now see you work your magic properly when you leave me."

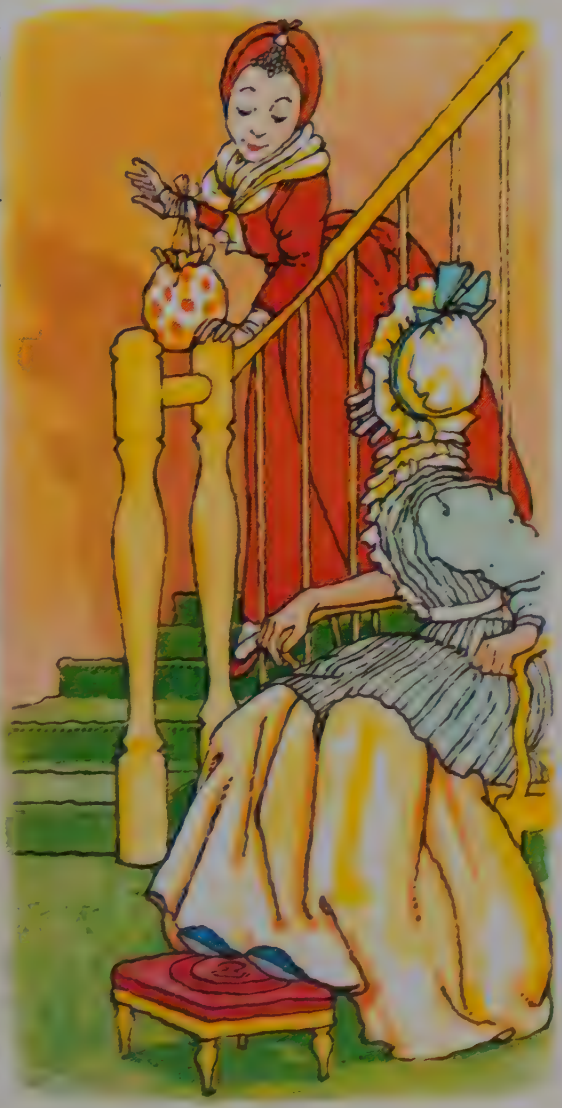
The pencil stood up by itself, waggled a bit and then dropped down again.

"You've plenty of magic still in you, although you're so old," said Dame Quick-Eye. "Now—into my handbag you go—and keep quiet whilst you're there."

She went down to Mother Rose. "I've found what I wanted," she said. "Tomorrow morning we will go shopping together, and we will go somewhere that Nippy is sure to be. We shall see some fun in a short while!"

So the next day out they went with their shopping bags. They went to the baker's. Nippy wasn't there. They went to the butcher's and then to the grocer's. Ah—there he was, collecting his groceries.

Dame Quick-Eye looked at him. What a mean, shifty little goblin!



Yes, he needed a lesson all right. She took out her shopping list and her queer green and gold pencil. She put the pencil down on the counter.

Nippy saw it at once. His eyes gleamed. What a pencil! He could sell that for a lot of money to the Enchanter Sly-One.

Dame Quick-Eye bought a good many things. Then she took up her pencil. "Pencil, add up my bill," she said—and hey presto, that pencil ran itself down the bill and wrote down a sum of money at the bottom! Wonderful!

Nippy's eyes nearly fell out of his head. Good gracious! It wasn't only an unusually beautiful pencil, but a magic one, too. How extraordinary! He really must get hold of it.

Dame Quick-Eye put the pencil down on the counter again and turned her back on it to look at some plums in a bowl nearby. In a trice Nippy's long arm reached out and snapped up the pencil. It went into his pocket at once, and he was out of the door before Dame Quick-Eye had turned round.

But her quick eye had seen everything all right! There was a little mirror in the shop, and although she had her back to the counter, she had seen Nippy snatch up the pencil and run off with it. She smiled at Mother Rose.

"He's taken it," she said. "Now there'll be some fun!"

Well, before Nippy had gone far he felt something pricking him. What could it be? He put his hand into his pocket to see if he had a pin there, and he felt a sharp prick in his hand. Goodness—had he got a bee in his pocket or something?

He didn't know it was the sharp point on the end of the pencil! He got a few more pricks before he reached home and couldn't think what they were.

He took the pencil out and looked at it gleefully. "My word! You'll be worth a lot of money!" he said. "This *is* a bit of luck! To think you can add up sums too. You can do all my bills for me."

The pencil wriggled in his hand and gave him a dig with its sharp end. Nippy dropped it at once. "Ooooh—so it was you that kept pricking me! You horrid thing! I'll take you to the Enchanter Sly-One at once and get rid of you!"

But that pencil gaily hopped off the table and took itself to the bare wall. It scribbled something there in large writing:

"NO, YOU WON'T! I'M STAYING HERE!"

Nippy stared at the writing in astonishment. What a very, very magic pencil this was!

"It's no good your being rude to me," he said to the pencil. "You're going to be sold to the Enchanter, and I'm taking you now!"

He made a dart at the pencil and it jabbed its sharp end into his hand again. Nippy howled. "Oh you mean thing! You've got a sting!"

The pencil scribbled on the wall! "I only sting bad people. That's why I sting you!"

"Now you stop writing rude things about me," said Nippy angrily. "Suppose someone comes in and sees all that?"

He took a cloth and began to wipe off what the pencil had written. He went to the scullery to rinse out the cloth. When he came back he stared at the wall in horror. The pencil had been doing a bit of writing again!

"Nippy has got Mother Rose's best gloves in his top drawer. Isn't he a thief?" the pencil had written. Nippy went pale. Good gracious! Had the pencil been looking into his drawers? There were a lot of things there that Nippy didn't want anyone to see.

He grabbed at the pencil again and caught it. The pencil stung him hard and he dropped it with a yell. "I'll throw you in the fire next time I get you!" he shouted. The pencil at once went to write on the wall again:

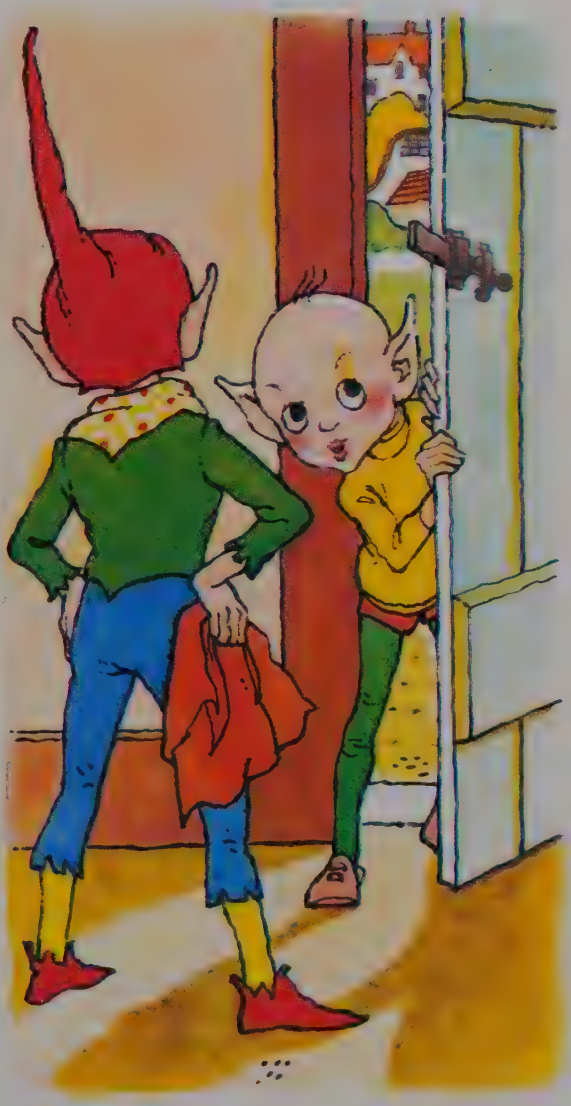
"Nippy is so afraid of me that he says he will throw me in the fire!"

Rat-a-tat-tat! That was a knock at the door. Nippy stared in despair at the wall. Goodness, he couldn't possibly ask anyone in with that scribbling on the wall. He rushed to get a wet cloth again. Soon he had the writing washed away, and he went to open the door.

"Goodness—you've been long enough opening the door!" said little Nosy-One, the imp. "What's up?"

"Nothing," said Nippy. "What do you want? Come to pay me my bill?"

"No," said Nosy-One. "I've come to say I can't. You'll have to give me another week."



"I can't possibly," said Nippy. "I've no money at all, and I've my own bills to pay."

Nosy-One suddenly stared at the wall behind Nippy's head. Nippy felt most uncomfortable. Was that pencil writing anything else?

It was. It had written:

"Nippy's got plenty of money in his left-hand drawer, and he's got a watch belonging to Father Timmy in the right-hand one. Shame on you, nasty Nippy!"

"Oooh—is that a magic pencil?" said Nosy-One, in amazement. "Isn't it rude? Does it keep writing things like that about you? Have you really got Father Timmy's watch? Oooh, I'm glad *I* haven't got a pencil like that!"

And out he ran to tell Father Timmy that Nippy had got his watch, and to spread the news that there was a very rude magic pencil at work in Nippy's house.

Father Timmy was soon round there. The wall had again been washed clean, but the pencil was hovering about, ready to begin its scribbling at any minute. Nippy had tried swatting at it with the fly-swatter, but the pencil was really very good at dodging.

"Have you got my watch, Nippy?" demanded Father Timmy sternly.

"No," said Nippy.

The pencil began writing in such a hurry that the words went all crooked: "Ooooh! He's a storyteller as well as a thief! Look in the right-hand top drawer."

Father Timmy pushed Nippy aside and looked in the drawer. There was his watch. He looked sternly at the goblin.

"I am going to Mr. Plod about this."

"Good!" wrote the pencil. "Fetch Mr. Plod!"

Father Timmy went out, frowning. Nippy stood glaring at the pencil. "Look here," he said, "will you please go away, back to your mistress, Dame Quick-Eye?"

"No," wrote the pencil. "I'm staying here for the rest of my life. It's a nice cottage—just what my mistress would like, too."

"Well, either you go or I go," said Nippy, and he hit out at the pencil again. It stung him and then wrote quickly.

"I'm staying," it wrote. "Goodbye!"

And goodbye it was, because Nippy didn't dare to stay with that enchanted pencil, and neither did he want to meet Mr. Plod if he came back with Father Timmy. So he packed his bag and caught the very next bus out of the village.

"Where's Nippy?" said Mr. Plod, when he came along with Father Timmy and Dame Quick-Eye, who was expecting something of the sort.

"Gone for good," wrote the pencil.

"Splendid," said Mr. Plod. "It will be a good riddance to bad rubbish. Well, I'll search the house and see what stolen goods there are. Then we'll sell the furniture and give the money to the many people Nippy has robbed. But what shall we do with the house?"

"It's just what I want," said Dame Quick-Eye at once. "I came to stay with Mother Rose to look for a house here, Mr. Plod. I want to live in this nice village. I'll have the house."

"We shall be delighted to have the owner of this remarkable pencil living in our village," said Father Timmy. "Do you agree, Mr. Plod?"

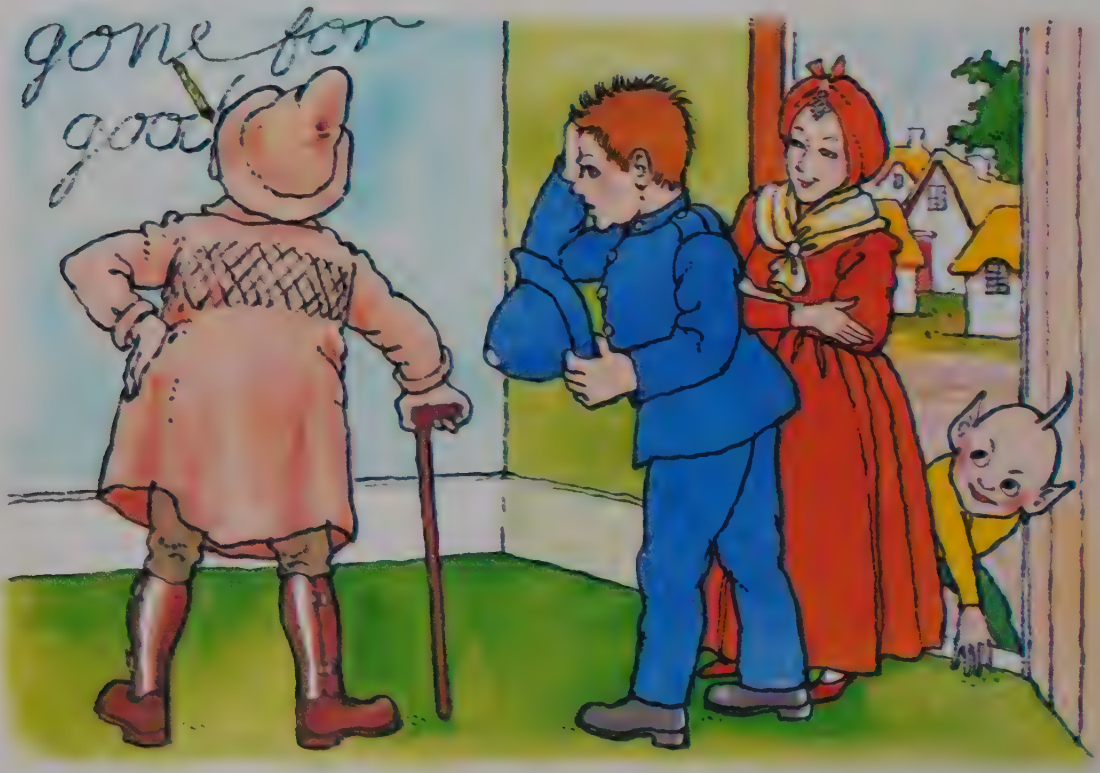
"I certainly do," said the policeman. "I'm very, very grateful to you, Dame Quick-Eye, for getting rid of that tiresome little nuisance. You shall certainly have this cottage as soon as ever it's ready."

The pencil scribbled quickly on the wall.

"Hurrah!" it wrote. "Three cheers! I like this place."

Dame Quick-Eye laughed. "Well, pencil, you won't be allowed to write on the walls once *I'm* living here. You'll have to behave yourself."

And the pencil wrote, "I will!"



Dicky Dawdle's Adventures

DICKY DAWDLE was just like his name. He was a real dawdler! He dawdled over his dressing in the morning, so that he was always late for breakfast. He was slow over his porridge, so that he was always late for school. He dreamed over his lessons, so he nearly always missed his playtime!

One day he met a little pixie fellow ambling down the lane, his hands in his pockets and his coat buttoned up wrong.

"Hello," said Dicky in surprise, for he saw that the little fellow was a pixie. "Who are you?"

"My name's Dickory Dawdle," said the little fellow.

"How funny!" said Dicky. "Mine's Dicky Dawdle. Where do you live?"

"In Pixie Wood," said Dickory. "I say, come along and spend the night with me, and I'll take you to the Brownie's Circus tomorrow. It's very, very good. You'll love it! And if there's time we'll go to the Wise Gnome's party!"

"Oooh!" said Dicky, excited. "I'll go and ask my mother."

His mother said yes, he might go. So Dicky packed his night-clothes and his tooth-brush and sponge and went to find Dickory again.

Together they went down the lane, through a hole in the hedge, over a stile that Dicky had never seen before—and there they were in Pixie Wood! It was a most exciting place, for fairies, pixies and gnomes trotted

about everywhere, going marketing, chatting to one another, and popping in and out of tree-houses and toadstool cottages.

"We'll go to bed early, Dicky," said Dickory. "You see, we must catch the eight-o'clock bus if we want to get to High-Up Hill, where the circus is held, in good time to buy front seats."

It was all very fine Dickory saying that—but he took such a long time getting the supper that Dicky was half asleep before it was finished!

Dickory Dawdle had a nice little house in a tree, with two round rooms—a sitting-room and a bedroom, one above the other. He *was* a dawdler! He would get the cloth to lay the table, and then put it down on a chair to do something else and forget all about the cloth.

Then he would spend half an hour hunting in the drawer again to find the cloth. Dicky got quite cross with him.

Supper was lovely. It was chocolate pudding with ice-cream sauce, and ginger-beer to drink through long straws. But Dickory Dawdle was so long serving out the pudding that the ice-cream sauce melted into custard!

They finished their supper at last, and Dickory Dawdle got up to clear away. But he dawdled about so much that the table was still uncleared in half an hour's time, and Dicky began to do it himself. He was so sleepy by this time that he longed to go to bed.

"Do hurry up, Dickory," he said. "I never knew anyone so slow as you!"

"Oh yes, you know some one *just* as slow," said Dickory crossly. "*You* are a real dawdler, too. I knew it as soon as I saw you mooning along the lane, just looking at nothing! I wouldn't have asked you to spend the night with me if I'd thought you were going to be impatient. Go to bed if you want to!"

So Dicky undressed and got into the tiny bed that Dickory showed him. Dickory spent such a long time finding his pyjamas and dawdling round the room that Dicky was asleep long before Dickory was even in bed!

Dicky had a watch. He looked at it when he woke up. He didn't want to miss the bus that went to High-Up Hill, for he badly wanted to see the Brownies' Circus.

"Hie, Dickory, it's seven o'clock already!" said Dicky. He jumped out of bed. This was a marvellous thing for him to do without being told, for he was usually very lazy indeed in the mornings!

Dickory didn't stir. Dicky pushed and shook him. "Leave me alone," said Dickory. "There's plenty of time."

"Well, we've got to dress and have breakfast," said Dicky impatiently. "I'll pull you out of bed!"

He did—and then Dickory *had* to get up, though he was very sulky about it. And, dear me, *how* he dawdled! He put a sock on—and then he sat on the bed and dreamed for a while. Then he put on another sock. After that he wandered round the room, whistling. Dicky watched him, feeling cross.

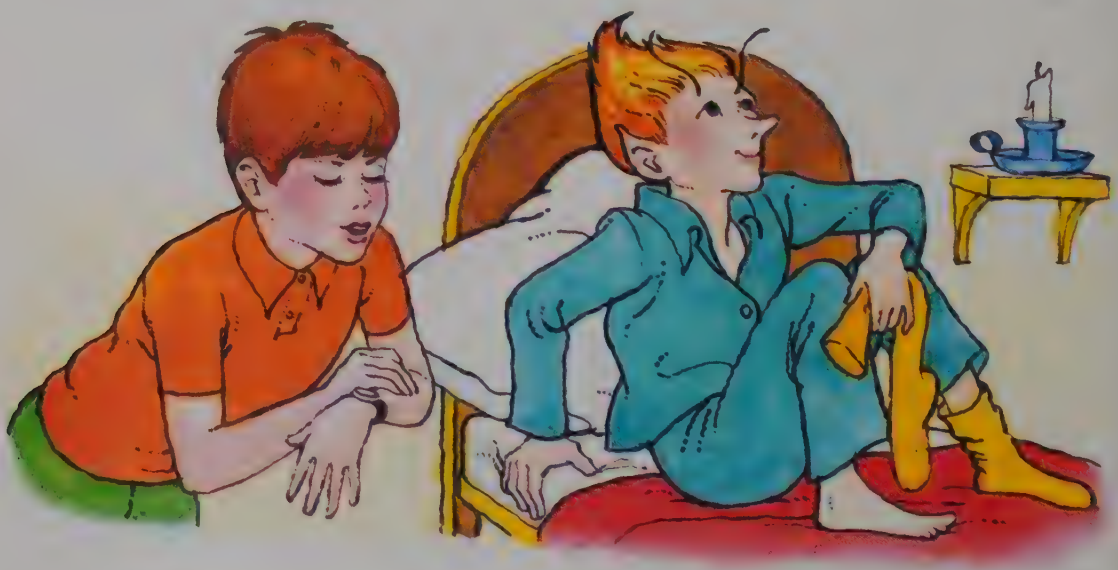
"Do hurry, Dickory. I want some breakfast before we go."

"Well, set the table then," said Dickory. "There is some cold ham in the larder, and we'll have ginger-beer to drink again. It's too much bother to make tea or cocoa."

So Dicky had to get the breakfast, because he could quite well see that Dickory would never have time.

And then Dickory dawdled over breakfast! He took ten minutes to chew one mouthful of ham! Dicky got crosser and crosser, quite forgetting that this was the sort of thing he usually did himself every day.

They left the dirty breakfast-things on the table and went to catch the bus. But Dickory wouldn't hurry a bit. He said there was plenty of time. He put his hands in his pockets and dawdled along, thinking of all kinds of things.



And when they got to the bus stop, in the middle of the wood, the bus was gone! There it was in the distance, a dear little yellow bus full of fairies and elves going to the circus! Dicky could have cried with rage.

"It's all your silly fault!" he said to Dickory. "If you hadn't been so slow over everything we would easily have caught the bus."

"Well, you're a fine fellow to talk, I must say!" said Dickory in surprise. "I've always heard that you are very slow yourself. Didn't I hear that you were late for school every day last week?"

Dicky went red. It was quite true. He and Dickory went back to the tree-house without saying a word more. They washed up, and then Dicky asked about the Gnome's party.

"What time have we to be there?" he said.

"Half-past two," said Dickory. "Heaps of time. We'll have dinner at twelve, and a little snooze afterwards."

"A snooze!" said Dicky. "I don't want a snooze!"

"Oh yes you do," said Dickory firmly. "All dawdlers like forty winks and snoozes and naps. Now don't start shouting at me or hurrying me, because I just won't have it. I'm a dawdler, like you, and I WON'T BE HURRIED!"

Well, they didn't have dinner at twelve, because Dickory dawdled so much over the potatoes that they were not cooked till one. There were stewed apples and custard, too, and cold chicken, but as Dickory forgot to watch the custard cooking it got burnt and he had to make some more. So it was about one o'clock when they sat down to dinner.

And though Dicky ate quickly, with his eyes on the cuckoo-clock that hung on the wall, Dickory would *not* hurry himself. He dawdled over his chicken, he dawdled over his pudding. Dicky was nearly in despair.

"We shall be late for the party!" he said.

"Plenty of time, plenty of time," said Dickory, yawning. "We *must* have a snooze first." And the tiresome little fellow lay down on the couch and went straight off to sleep.

At a quarter-past two there was a knock on the tree-door. As Dickory was asleep, Dicky opened the door. There was a small fairy outside, very smartly dressed, all ready for the party. She smiled at Dicky.

"The rabbit carriage is here to take you and Dickory to the party," she said. "We are all waiting for you."

"Dickory's asleep!" cried Dicky, and he ran to shake the pixie. The fairy looked upset.

"We can't wait whilst you wash and tidy yourselves," she said. "And you can't possibly come like that. Look at your coat, Dickory! You've

spilt custard all down it! You're such a dawdler that it would take you ages to change it. We shan't wait for you. Good-bye!"

"Oh, but can't you take me without Dickory?" asked Dicky, disappointed.

"Oh no!" said the fairy. "Come another time, but don't get Dawdle to take you or you'll never get there!"

She ran off. Dicky was very angry with Dickory. He put on his cap and went to the door.

"I'm going home," he said. "I'll never get anywhere if I leave things to you. You dreadful slowcoach!"

"Now just stop calling me names!" said Dickory angrily as he at last rose slowly from the couch. "Who's a slow old snail and never finishes his dinner till it's time for afternoon school? *You* are! Who's as slow as a tortoise over going to bed each night? *You* are!"

But Dicky wouldn't listen to any more. It was dreadful to hear things like that—because he knew they were true.

"Well, if that's what it's like living with a dawdler, no wonder Mummy gets angry with *me*," said Dicky as he hurried home. "It seems as if dawdlers miss all the good things and all the treats. My word, Mummy's going to get a surprise tomorrow!"

And she did! You should have seen how Dicky jumped out of bed when he was called! You should have seen him run to school! And before the morning had gone he was top of the class.

Do you dawdle? Well, go and spend a day with Dickory Dawdle and tell me how you like it!

Mr. Tantrum and the Fog

MR. TANTRUM was a bad-tempered fellow and nobody in Heigh-Ho Village liked him at all. He was always frowning, he hardly ever spoke without shouting, and he flew into a temper about just nothing at all!

The worst of it was that everyone was afraid of him. The children were frightened of being slapped by him. The shop-keepers hated his loud voice and haughty ways. The ordinary village-folk disliked to see him coming along to talk to them because he always disagreed with everything they said, and was most rude about it.

Mr. Tantrum had plenty of money and he did what he liked, said what he liked, and never cared twopence about anybody else. Nobody dared to stand up to him at all.

Only little Jiminy Jinks really said out loud what he thought of Mr. Tantrum.

" If I were as big as he is I'd pull his hair and shout at him and give him a good slapping! " said Jiminy.

" Oh no, you wouldn't! " said the villagers. " You only say that because you are small and know that you will never have a chance to go for him. Don't boast. If you feel so badly about him, think of some idea to pay him out for his annoying ways! "

Jiminy went red. He didn't like being told that he boasted. He thought he would try and think of some way to punish Mr. Tantrum, but although he thought for a long time he just couldn't find any way of teaching him a lesson.

It was the big fog that really put an idea into his head. Yes—he really did think of a marvellous idea!

"I know that Mr. Tantrum is going to see his Aunt Jemima tomorrow evening," he thought. "And I know that he always finds it difficult to find his way back when he gets to the cross-roads. I'll be waiting there for him—and I'll give him a little shock!"

Well, Jiminy Jinks did a few extraordinary things before he went to meet Mr. Tantrum at the cross-roads. In the thick fog he went to where a big scarlet pillar-box stood at the corner of the street. He took with him a large football, a big hat, a pot of glue, and a large old mackintosh.

Jiminy stuck the football on the top of the pillar-box with glue. He put the hat on it. That made it look exactly as if the pillar-box had a head!

Then he wrapped the enormous old mackintosh round the pillar-box and buttoned it up. It was a very tight fit.

Jiminy did giggle when he saw what the pillar-box looked like in the fog.

"It looks exactly like a big burly man," said Jiminy with a chuckle. "My word, Mr. Tantrum will be sorry if he tries to

fight Mr. Pillar-box! Well,—we'll see!"

Jiminy went off to the cross-roads to meet Mr. Tantrum. Soon he heard him coming along. Mr. Tantrum stopped at the cross-roads and Jiminy walked nearby.

"Hie! You there! Which is the way to Cherry-Tree Street?" shouted Mr. Tantrum in his most commanding voice.

"Oh, to your left there and straight on," said Jiminy. Now this certainly wasn't the quickest way to go—but Jiminy had a reason for sending him wrong, as we know.

Off went Mr. Tantrum without a word of thanks! Pretty soon he knew that he had gone wrong, and he looked about for somebody else to ask the right way.

Jiminy had known he would do that! There was the pillar-box, looming up just nearby, looking exactly like a big man! Mr. Tantrum shouted to him.

"Hie, you! I want the way to Cherry-Tree Street."

Now Jiminy had darted round the streets another way and had come up behind the pillar-box. So he answered at once, in as deep a voice as he could make.

"Well, if you want the way, get it. Nobody is stopping you!"

Mr. Tantrum was simply amazed to have such a rude answer.

"Look here!" he said in a loud voice. "I don't think you know who you're talking to."

"Well, by the sound of you, I should think I must be talking to Mr. Bad-Temper or Mr. Very-Rude!" answered Jiminy, who was thoroughly enjoying himself.

Mr. Tantrum was so angry that he almost choked.

"I suppose you think that because you're a big fat fellow you can treat people how you like!" he shouted.

"No, no," answered the pillar-box. "It's you who think that, dear Mr. Furious. Everyone in the village knows how you behave, just because you're a big, rich, bad-tempered fellow! Ah, you'd behave very differently if you were small and poor."

"Now look here, if you dare to say another word to me, I'll punch you!" cried Mr. Tantrum, so angry that he almost swallowed his tongue.

"I'll speak lots more words!" shouted the pillar-box. "I'll tell you all about yourself! I'll speak about your bad manners, your disagreeable ways, your loud voice, and your bad tempers. I'll . . ."

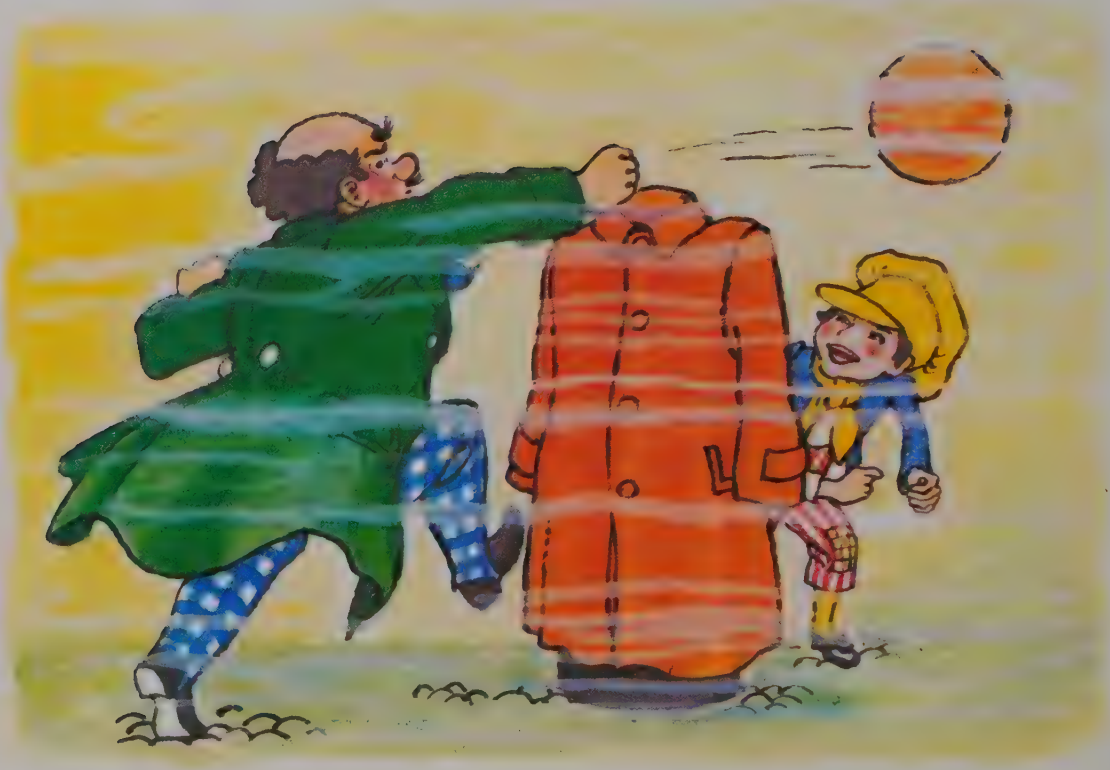
But that was just too much for Mr. Tantrum! He quite lost his temper and he struck out at the pillar-box in a great rage. His hand hit against the hard steel sides of the pillar-box and Mr. Tantrum yelled with pain. He danced about holding his hand. Jiminy darted out from behind the pillar-box and knocked off Mr. Tantrum's hat.

Mr. Tantrum thought that the pillar-box had done it, of course. He rushed at it again, shouting "I'll teach you to knock off my hat! Just wait till you feel both my fists!"

The pillar-box waited. It didn't mind at all! Slap! Bang! Mr. Tantrum went for that pillar-box with both his fists, and good gracious me, how he hurt himself!

"Come on again!" yelled Jiminy, from behind the box. "Come on! I don't care how hard you hit me. Kick me if you like!"

Well then, Mr. Tantrum went quite mad, and he rushed once more



at the pillar-box and hit out and kicked with all his might. He nearly broke his fingers, he nearly broke his toes! How he hurt himself!

And last of all he hit out at the football head on top of the pillar-box and sent it flying off into the fog. That surprised Mr. Tantrum very much and gave him a real shock. He stood still and stared. He had meant to hurt this fat rude man, but he really hadn't meant to knock off his head. He was frightened.

Jiminy came up to him. "Hallo, Mr. Tantrum," he said. "What's happening here?"

"No-n-n-nothing," answered Mr. Tantrum nervously, holding his hands against his chest, for they hurt him very much.

"Mr. Tantrum! You've knocked this poor fellow's head right off!" cried Jiminy. "See what your bad temper has led you to! We always said you would do something dreadful if you didn't try to manage your temper! How *could* you knock somebody's head off! I must fetch a policeman."

" No, no—don't do that! " begged Mr. Tantrum, shivering like a jelly. " Please don't. I'm very sorry, really I am. Don't tell anybody."

" I must certainly go and fetch a policeman," said Jiminy in a very solemn voice. " We can't have you going about doing things like this."

He disappeared a little way into the fog. Soon he heard the sound of running feet. Mr. Tantrum was rushing away before the policeman came! Jiminy went back to the big pillar-box, leaned against it, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks!

Then he found the football head and the hat, unbuttoned the mackintosh, and went home. In the morning he went round to everyone's house and told them about the joke he had played on Mr. Tantrum. How they laughed!

" We'll see whether he is quite so tiresome as usual! " they said. So they waited for Mr. Tantrum to come to market to do his shopping.

But he didn't come! He had packed his bag, caught the earliest bus, and gone to his Aunt Jemima. He didn't come back again, but people who met him said that he was quite, quite different. In fact, he is now known as Mr. Meek-and-Mild, so you can tell that he learnt his lesson all right. Poor Mr. Tantrum!

Wanted–
A Chatterbox

ONCE THE little Prince of Heyho fell very ill, and lay in bed for many weeks. When he grew better he was allowed to sit up for a few minutes each day—but, oh, how bored he was because he was not allowed to do anything at all!

"I mustn't read! I mustn't play with my soldiers! I mustn't do my jigsaws! It's always: I mustn't! I mustn't! I mustn't!" he said crossly. "I'm so bored. I'm so dull."

'You could have your musical-box," said his nurse. "You like that, don't you?"

"Yes," said the little prince, and his nurse fetched it for him. She set it going by winding the key at the bottom of the box. She put it on the bed, and it began to tinkle out its pretty tunes.

"Now, you are not to wind it up when it runs down," said his nurse. "I will do that for you."

The little prince lay and listened to the music. He liked it. But very soon the musical-box needed winding again. He called for his nurse, but she wasn't there. Bother! Now he would have to lie with nothing to do, nothing to listen to again! He kicked out crossly—and the box fell off the bed with a crash. Oh dear! Was it broken?

When his nurse came back again she picked up the box. "Did it fall off?" she said. "Oh, I do hope it isn't broken!"

But it was. It was very sad, and the prince cried about it. It was the nicest musical-box in the kingdom.

"Never mind," said his nurse. "I'll see if I can get you another."

So she did—but the tunes were silly and the little prince quickly got bored with them. He kicked the box off the bed—and that was broken, too.

"You're naughty," said his nurse. "I shan't get you another one."

That afternoon, when the prince was supposed to be fast asleep, he heard tapping at his window. Then a small, long-eared head peeped in. It was Big-Eyes, the pixie who used to play with the prince when he was well.

"Can't stop a minute!" he said in a whisper. "Just came to see how you are, little prince."

"Bored and dull," said the prince, and tears ran down his cheeks. "I've had two musical-boxes and they're both broken. Anyway, they only play music. I'd like a box that could say things to me—go on and on like a musical-box, but could *tell* me things instead of playing music."

"Well—I've heard of Chatter-Boxes," said Big-Eyes. "Have you? Shall I see if I can get you a Chatter-Box? It should be full of chatter and talk—you wouldn't be bored if you had a Chatter-Box, would you?"

"Oh, that does sound a good idea," said the little prince, cheering up. "Get me a Chatter-Box, Big-Eyes, do. A nice big one, full of chatter and talk."

Big-Eyes slid down from the window, almost tumbling out of the big

pear-tree he was in. He jumped to the ground and stood there, thinking hard, his ears sticking straight up. Where could he get a Chatter-Box? A box that would talk and talk and talk!

"I've never heard of one in Heyho Land," he thought. "But there may be one in the land of boys and girls. They have all sorts of wonderful things there. I might be able to buy a Chatter-Box there."

So off he went to our land, and began to poke about in the shops. He wore a big hat to cover up his pixie ears, and most people thought he was a rather queer-looking little boy.

"What do you want?" asked the shopman at a big toy shop. "Those are all musical-boxes there. Do stop winding them up. I'm tired of the noise. Do you want to buy one?"

"Well—I don't want a *musical*-box," said Big-Eyes. "I'm really looking for a Chatter-Box."

The man laughed. "A chatterbox! What a queer little fellow you are, to be sure! Chatterboxes aren't sold in shops, you know."

"Where can I get one, then?" asked Big-Eyes.

The man laughed again. "Well, my boy," he said, "if you want to hear one you go to that house up the hill there—the one with the red curtains. You'll find a little girl there called Polly. She's a chatterbox all right. Never stops talking day or night!"

"Thank you," said Big-Eyes, surprised to hear that a *little girl* could be a Chatter-Box. "I'll go and listen to her. She may be just what I want."

So off he went to the house with red curtains. He squeezed in at an open window and stood listening in a little room. From somewhere not far away there came a pretty little voice.

"And, Mummy, it was such a nice little cat I couldn't help stroking it, and it said 'Miaow, miaow,' just like that and I'm sure it liked me, so I went to the milkman and I asked him for a saucer of milk, and do you know he gave me one, but when I got back to where I'd left the cat it was gone so I had to give the milk to a dog I met and he was very naughty, he broke the saucer the milkman gave me and——"

"Polly, do stop chattering for a moment!" said another voice. "I'm trying to read."

"Oh, Mummy, what are you reading? I do hope it's something exciting, then you can tell me about it," said Polly's voice. "I won't talk

for a minute, then—but oh, I must tell you about something I read yesterday. Do you know, I read in my book that——"

"Be quiet, Polly, darling," said her mother. "I never in my life knew such a little chatterbox."

"Oh dear—I've got such a lot to say and nobody ever wants to hear it!" sighed Polly. "Well, I'll talk to my dolls instead. Angela, come here. Sit up nicely. That's right. Now, did I ever tell you about a doll I once had whose eyes got shut and wouldn't open, and——"

"POLLY! *Will* you stop talking for a minute?" cried her mother. "Chatter, chatter, chatter, all day long—and you even talk in your sleep. Be quiet, you little chatterbox."

Big-Eyes had been listening with great interest. He longed to know what had happened to the doll with shut eyes. He thought that he could listen to Polly all day long. What a *lovely* Chatter-Box! He hid himself behind a curtain and waited for Polly's mother to leave Polly by herself.

As soon as the mother had gone into the kitchen Big-Eyes slipped into the nursery, wondering what kind of a girl this Chatter-Box was. Perhaps she lived in a big box?

No, she didn't. There she was, quite an ordinary little girl, nursing a doll. She looked up in surprise at Big-Eyes.

"Little girl, I want you to come with me," said Big-Eyes. "I'm looking for a Chatter-Box to take to the little Prince of Heyho. He's ill and bored—he'll love to listen to you."

"But I don't want to come with you!" said Polly in alarm. "I'll call my mother if you make me go!"

Big-Eyes didn't let her call her mother. He muttered a few magic words and Polly's eyes closed at once. She put her head down on the table and slept. Big-Eyes touched her with his little magic wand and she grew small —as small as Angela, her doll! How queer she looked, poor little Polly.

Big-Eyes looked round for something to put her in to carry her away. He saw a cardboard box in a corner. Just the thing! He lifted the tiny Polly and put her carefully into the box. He made some little holes in it for her to breathe fresh air. Then he ran out of the room with the box in his arms. It wasn't long before he got back to the palace and climbed up the pear-tree to the window. He put the box on the bed and grinned at the little prince.

"I've brought you a Chatter-Box. The chatter is inside. It's asleep at present, but when it wakes up it will talk all day long. This is a real proper Chatter-Box!"

Well, when Polly woke up she had quite a lot to say. She tried to get out of the box. She couldn't, of course, and she began to talk fast.

"Let me out, it's not fair to keep me in here, I feel like a caterpillar or something, shut up in a box, and I don't like it. I know what a caterpillar feels like now, and it reminds me of some I once had. They were silkworms and I didn't shut them up in a box, I left off the lid, but some sparrows came or some thrushes, I don't know which, and they saw my lovely silkworms and they gobbled them all up and when I came back——"

The little prince listened in delight. "It's a lovely Chatter-Box," he said. "I do like it. Go on, Chatter-Box."

"Who are you, I'd like to know, talking to me like that?" said Polly, crossly. "You let me out of this box. It smells of soap or something. I shall smell of soap, too, and I would rather smell of lavender water, I've got some in a little bottle that Granny gave me for my birthday and she gave me a teddy bear too, but he hasn't got a growl any more, it suddenly went, I think somebody must have trodden on him, poor thing . . ."

"Oh, go on, go on," begged the little prince, feeling most interested.

"What do you mean, go on, go on?" said Polly, from inside the box, still feeling puzzled and annoyed. "Go on, go on, indeed, as if I was a railway train or a motor-car rushing down the road! I wish I was, then I'd rush back home and go in at the back door, but perhaps I couldn't if

I was a train, I should frighten Mummy too much and I might even knock down the walls, and certainly the cat would be scared out of her life and she might desert her kittens, she's got three, and they're so sweet, especially the little ginger one who hasn't got a name . . ."

"Call him Marmalade," said the little prince, more and more interested.

There was a snort from inside the box. "What a name for a kitten! Might as well call him Apricot Jam. Who are you, talking away to me like that? You let me out or I'll break this box to pieces, and——"

"It's a perfectly LOVELY Chatter-Box," said the little prince. "It goes on and on and on—I don't expect it will ever stop, Big-Eyes. I shall never be dull or bored now, never!"

Nurse was very surprised when she came in and heard the voice from the box.

"It's my new Chatter-Box," explained the prince. "It goes on and on like that, telling me all kinds of things. I love it. Don't take it away, Nurse. Big-Eyes brought it for me."

Well, all that day, and half the night too, Polly chattered away. She felt very hungry, but it didn't occur to anyone that Chatter-Boxes needed food, any more than musical-boxes did. The little prince thought it was marvellous that his new toy didn't even need winding up.

In the morning Polly awoke, stiff and uncomfortable and very, very hungry. She battered at the box and began to shout loudly, half crying.

"Let me out, let me out! Why have you put me in here like this? Why do you keep me a prisoner? I want to go home, I want my breakfast, I want my mother, let me out!"

"Are you alive, then? Aren't you a *toy* Chatter-Box?" cried the little prince. "Are you really somebody?"

"Of course I'm somebody. I'm Polly Jones, and I want to go home!" shouted Polly. "Let me out! Why have you put me here?"

When Big-Eyes arrived he found the little prince looking worried. "My Chatter-Box isn't a toy," he said. "It's somebody real. We'd better open the box."

"Of course it's somebody real," said Big-Eyes. "It's a girl called Polly. She's a marvellous Chatter-Box; that's why I caught her, made her small and shut her up in this box to chatter to you. She can't stop. Her tongue is never still. We will keep her here till you are better. I'll put a little bread and milk for her into the box to-day."

Polly had heard all this. Her heart almost stopped in fright. What! She had been made small —and put into this box—and made a prisoner so that she could amuse somebody? Then she wouldn't say another word!

So she shut her lips tightly and was quite silent. "Talk!" cried the little prince, tapping the box. "Chatter away! Tell me things!"

No sound from the box at all. Big-Eyes tapped too. "Chatter, chatter, chatter!" he commanded. No sound came out. Not a word! Big-Eyes opened the box and looked inside.

"Perhaps she's run down," said the prince. "Can she be wound up?"

"No. She hasn't a key," said Big-Eyes. "I do hope she chatters soon."

But Polly didn't. She was afraid to, in case they kept her there. She hoped Big-Eyes would take her home if she didn't say a single word.

And that is just what he did. He carried her back in the box, and opened it, and made her grow to her own size again. She was so glad!

"Oh, thank you!" she cried. "It was dreadful to be put into a box and taken away, just because I was such a chatterbox. I've never been

quiet for so long before. You were bad to do all that to me. I shan't chatter so much again."

"Oh—you're talking again now," said Big-Eyes in delight. "I've a good mind to make you small again."

"It wouldn't be any good," said Polly. "I should just close my mouth and not say a word. But if you like to show me the way I'll come with you to-morrow and talk to the little prince, so that he won't be quite so dull. But please, please don't ever put me into a box again!"

So she went to visit the prince and talked to him and played games, so that he wasn't dull any more and soon felt much better.

And Polly didn't talk *quite* so much at home after that! Her mother had only to say, "Oh, Polly, don't be such a *chatterbox*!" and Polly would shut her lips and not say another word. She didn't want to be a box of chatter again—no, she'd soon show her mother that she *could* be quiet if she wanted to.

Are *you* a chatterbox? You are? Well, do look out for Big-Eyes, then. He'll love to know you and take you to the little prince! I expect you'd love it too!

He Wouldn't Buy a Ticket

Mister Scrimp was very mean with his money. When he went to market he always haggled with Dame Plump over her lovely butter, and beat her down a penny or two. And he would never pay Mother Silver-Top what she asked for her eggs.

" He's a mean old thing," said everyone in Apple-Tree Village. " He never even gives a penny to a child, or remembers anyone's birthday. Nasty old Scrimp."

Scrimp spent his money on himself. He liked beautiful things, which was rather queer because he had an ugly nature and a cold heart.

" I'll buy that lovely picture," he would say, and he would give quite a lot of money for the picture he wanted.

" I'll buy that carpet! " " I'll buy that mirror! It's so beautiful." " I'll buy that tea-set with the apple-blossom all round it. It's lovely."

They were the sort of things he said, and his cottage was soon full of really lovely treasures. How he polished and cleaned them! He was proud of them but when he asked people in to see them he never even offered them a cup of tea!

" Fancy that now! " said kind Dame Plump. " I went in to see that new vase he has bought—and a beautiful thing it is, too—and I took him a pat of my best butter—and though the kettle was boiling on the hob and he'd got a whole plate of sugar biscuits set out for his tea, he never so much as offered me a crumb! "

" Disgusting," said everyone. " Well, well—he'll be sorry some day. That's not the way to get friends round you. He soon won't have a friend in Apple-Tree Village! "

Mister Scrimp didn't mind that. Friends meant that he would have to give them tea or a cup of cocoa or offer them a bun. He didn't like that. Let everyone keep away! Then he would have more money to spend on lovely things for himself.

Now, Mister Scrimp had an old mother who lived some miles away, in Cherry-Tree Village. She was about the only person he was fond of, and he went to see her once a week. But he didn't take her any presents—oh, no! What, pick some flowers from his garden, or spend sixpence on the peppermint sweets she loved! Of course not!

" You buy a pat of my butter to take to that poor old mother of yours," Dame Plump said to him once. But Mister Scrimp didn't even answer. Spend his money on butter for his mother! What next!

One day, when he was polishing a new and very beautiful tray he had bought for himself, a man drew up outside in a cart. He was on his way to the market. He called to Mister Scrimp.

" Hey, Mister Scrimp. I've got a message for you from Cherry-Tree Village. I've just come from there. Your poor old mother is very ill. Oh, very ill indeed, and she's calling out for you all day long. You'd better pack and go."

" Oh dear, oh dear! " said Mister Scrimp, in dismay. " My poor old mother! She seemed all right last week. Is she in bed? "

" Of course," said the man, clicking to his horse. " She

had a bad fall two days ago. You'd better get along there quickly if you want to see the poor old lady alive."

Mister Scrimp was very upset. He ran to his next door neighbour, Mrs. Kindly. " Oh, what shall I do? My old mother is very ill. I must go to her. But what about my hens? "

" Now, now, don't you worry a bit," said Mrs. Kindly, sorry to see Mr. Scrimp's pale face. " I'll see to your hens for you. You pack your bag and go. I'll pop in each day and dust round and keep all your treasures nice for you. You go straight away now, Mister Scrimp—and take a bunch of flowers from my garden for the old lady, and this packet of sweets. Maybe she'll be better when she sees you."

Mister Scrimp picked a bunch of flowers from Mrs. Kindly's garden, but he didn't pick any from his own. His mother would think these were from him. He would just tell her that Mrs. Kindly had sent the sweets, but not say anything about the flowers.

He packed his bag quickly.

Before he had finished, many of the villagers came to tell him that they were sorry to hear about his old mother.

" Mothers are very precious," said Dame Plump. " You take care of yours. She's been a good mother to you. Give her this bit of butter with my love."

" And don't you worry about all your beautiful things! " said Mrs. Kindly. " *We'll* look after them for you. Now cheer up, Mister Scrimp, and give your mother our best wishes."

Mister Scrimp caught the next bus to Cherry-Tree Village. He found his old mother very ill indeed. She was so pleased to see him, and took his hand in hers.

" I'm glad to see you, son," she said. " You will stay with me, won't you? Oh, what lovely flowers—and these sweets, too—and the butter! Why, you must love me after all! You've never brought me anything before, you know, son, and I've worried because I thought your heart was like a stone. Nobody can be happy with a cold heart. But yours must be warm after all—because look at the things you've brought me! "

Mister Scrimp didn't like to say that they were not from him, so he just held his mother's hand and nodded. " Now just you lie and rest, Mother," he said. " I'll stay with you till you're better."

His old mother looked at him happily. Why, her son couldn't be the mean, cold-hearted person that nobody seemed to like. Hadn't he left

his nice cottage and all its beautiful things to come to her? Hadn't he brought her flowers and presents?

When her friends came in to see her, the old lady talked about her son. " He's so kind," she said. " So generous. Left his nice cottage and all his treasures to come and be with me. Brought me so many presents, too—do you see those lovely flowers? They must have been the best in the garden."

The carter who had brought the message to Mister Scrimp came to see her, too. The old lady told him the same thing. He went back to Apple-Tree Village and repeated it to everyone.

" Well, would you think mean old Mister Scrimp was so nice after all?" said Dame Plump. " It just shows how you can make a mistake about people."

Mister Scrimp didn't buy his mother any more flowers. He didn't give a penny to any of the children who brought little gifts from their mothers. He wouldn't give a sixpence towards a present for the village nurse, who came every day to see his old mother.

And when someone came collecting at the door for a fund to buy things for somebody in Apple-Tree Village, his own town, he slammed the door in the surprised woman's face.

" What nonsense! " he said to his mother, when he told her about it. " Collecting for somebody in my village! They've all got plenty of money. I won't give a penny! "

" Didn't you even find out who it was for? " said the old lady. " It might be for someone who is in real need of it, son."

" There's nobody in need of it! " said Mister Scrimp. " I ought to know, oughtn't I? "

And then somebody came round selling tickets. " It's for a Fair that is being held at Apple-Tree Village," explained the little woman with the tickets. " You see, they are doing their best to get a large sum to give to this person who has lost . . ."

" Well I never! Collecting for that person again! Who is she, I'd like to know! I'm from Apple-Tree Village myself, and I tell you this, I wouldn't buy a ticket to help anyone there. So don't come here again! "

Now, when his mother was better, Mister Scrimp packed his bag again, said good-bye and went. He caught the bus and came to Apple-Tree Village. The Fair was on, and flags were up. There was even a roundabout.

" Come and buy a ticket! " called a child. " Come and have some fun! "

" Buy a ticket! " snorted Mister Scrimp. " What nonsense. Hey, Dame Plump, a word with you, please. What's all this about getting a fund for somebody in the village? They even came bothering me at Cherry-Tree Village to buy tickets! Such nonsense! "

Dame Plump looked at Mister Scrimp, and for a little while she didn't say anything.

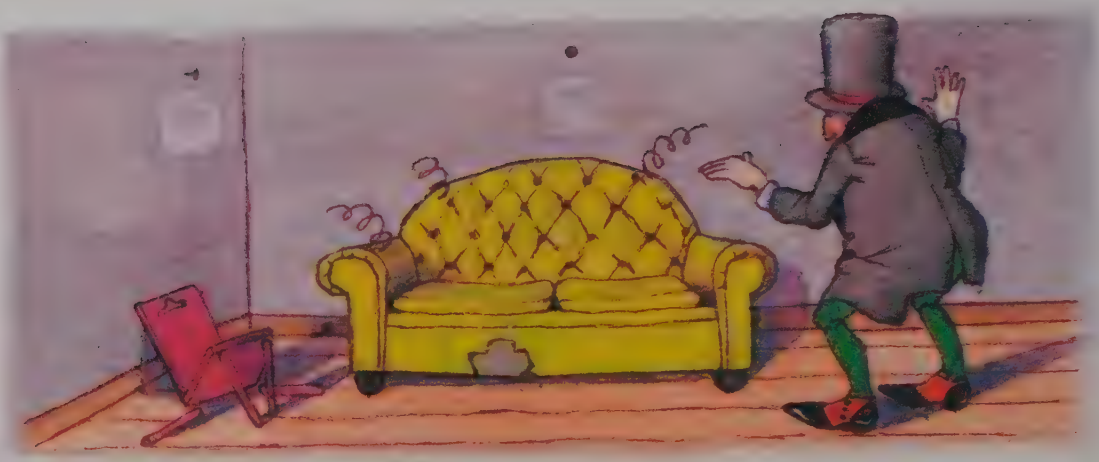
" Well, Mister Scrimp," she said at last, " I will tell you about this man. You know him quite well. He went away, feeling troubled and anxious over something, and we were sorry for him. And whilst he was away thieves broke in and stole almost everything from his cottage. They just left the kitchen stove and a broken chair and old sofa. Nothing else."

" Well—he's still got something left," said Mister Scrimp, impatiently. "Quite enough! "

" Perhaps you are right," said Dame Plump. " Well, Mrs. Kindly was very upset and started this fund, and we thought we'd run a Fair too, and all the money we made we would put towards buying furniture for the cottage—so that when this poor man came back he would at least find a bed, a table and things like that."

"What nonsense! " said Mister Scrimp. " Let him work a bit and earn money to buy them himself. Silly, soft-hearted lot you are. *I* wouldn't buy a ticket to help. I'm a sensible man. Where does this fellow live? "

" In your street," said Dame Plump. " Well, Mister Scrimp, I'm glad to have your advice. You really think we are foolish to be generous and kind over the matter? What do you think we ought to do with the money we've collected? "



" Oh, use it yourselves! " said Mister Scrimp impatiently. " Buy anything you want. But don't ask *me* for help! "

He stalked off down the street. Dame Plump followed him a little way behind. He came to his cottage, and put his key in the front door. He opened it—and then he stared in the utmost dismay!

The hall was empty. The hall-chair was gone, the mat was gone, the umbrella-stand wasn't there! The stair-carpet was gone. Mister Scrimp went into his sitting-room and looked round in horrified surprise.

There was only a broken chair and an old sofa in it. Nothing else at all. Gone were his beautiful mirror, his lovely vase, his bright carpet, his gay tea-set.

In horror Mister Scrimp went into the other rooms. They were empty. The thieves had done a thorough job and had taken everything worth taking—and dear me, there had been a lot of valuable things in Mister Scrimp's cottage for robbers to take!

" I've been robbed! I've got nothing left! " groaned Mister Scrimp, sitting down heavily on the old sofa. " I've no money either, for I spent it all on my treasures. I'm a poor, miserable fellow who has been robbed of everything he possesses! "

Dame Plump came in with Mrs. Kindly. They both looked rather stern. " Mister Scrimp, we are sorry you have had to come back to such a desolate, empty cottage," said Mrs. Kindly. " You can see what has happened. We were so sorry about it that we started a fund for you, and wanted to run a Fair so that we could buy new things for you with the money."

" But now that we know you think such an idea is all nonsense, we will certainly do as you say, and spend the money on ourselves," said Dame Plump. " What a mean creature you are, Mister Scrimp! You wouldn't even buy a ticket to help someone in need—and now you discover that it was *yourself* we wanted to help, I expect you'd like to change your mind! "

The two women went out. Mister Scrimp groaned. If only he hadn't been so mean! The people of Apple-Tree Village must have got such a lot of money for him. They could have bought him all his furniture. Now he only had the sofa, the chair and the kitchen stove.

Mrs. Kindly came in that evening after the Fair. Mr. Scrimp had dug up some potatoes from his garden and was trying to boil them on the stove in an old tin.

" Mister Scrimp," said Mrs. Kindly, " we collected over a hundred pounds. But we are going to spend it on the children of this village, and lay out a playground for them with swings and sand-pits. I'm sorry we

couldn't spend it on you, but we don't feel that someone as mean as you should have any money."

"You're right," said Mister Scrimp. "I'm ashamed of myself. I should have been warm-hearted and generous when I heard of someone whose goods had been stolen—I can tell you, Mrs. Kindly, I know what it's like now to feel poor and unhappy—I'd give anything to have a little kindness shown me, but I shan't get any. And it serves me right!"

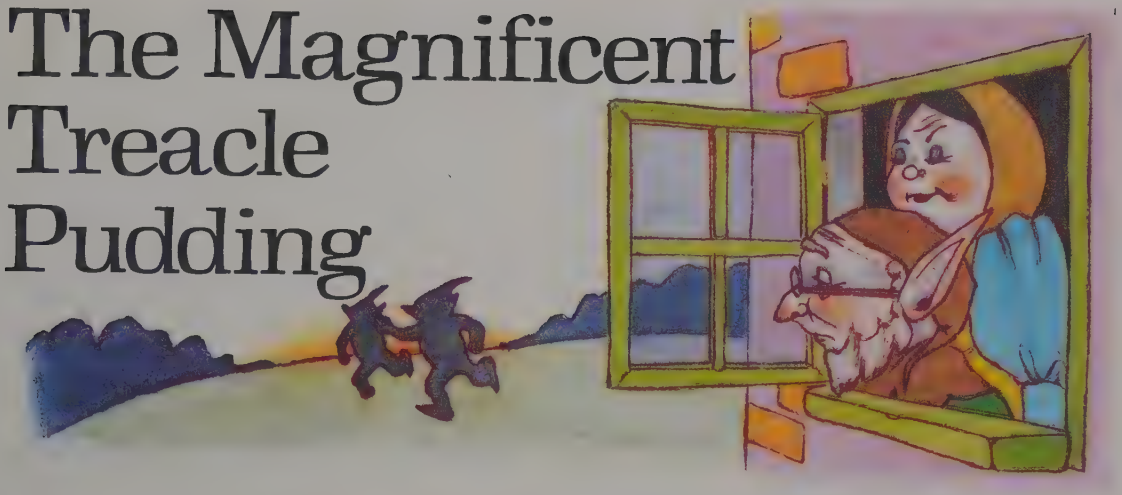
Mrs. Kindly looked at him, trying to cook his potatoes in a tin. "You come along and have supper with me," she said. "Mr. Kindly will lend you a few things, I'm sure—another chair—an old bed—a bit of mat for your feet. You come along."

"Well, I was never so glad of a bit of kindness in my life!" said Mister Scrimp. "Do you mean it? Mrs. Kindly, you warm my cold heart!"

"Do I?" said Mrs. Kindly. "Now you listen to me, Mister Scrimp. See that your heart *keeps* warm, and do a bit of kindness to others. Loving-kindness is the biggest thing in the world. You try it!"

So Mister Scrimp is trying it, and he says Mrs. Kindly is quite right —it *is* the biggest and best thing in the world!

The Magnificent Treacle Pudding



ONCE a year Pinch and Grab, the goblins, went to stay with their Uncle Bong. Bong was a kind and gentle fellow, always pleased to see Pinch and Grab, and anxious to give them a good time.

But Pinch and Grab were not very nice guests to have. They liked the best of everything for themselves, and if nobody gave it to them they took it!

Pinch sat in Uncle Bong's own armchair each evening. Grab read his uncle's paper and didn't pass it to him till he had finished. Pinch took more than his fair share of the sugar for his porridge in the morning. Grab took so much marmalade that there was hardly any left in the pot for Uncle Bong by the time he was ready for it.

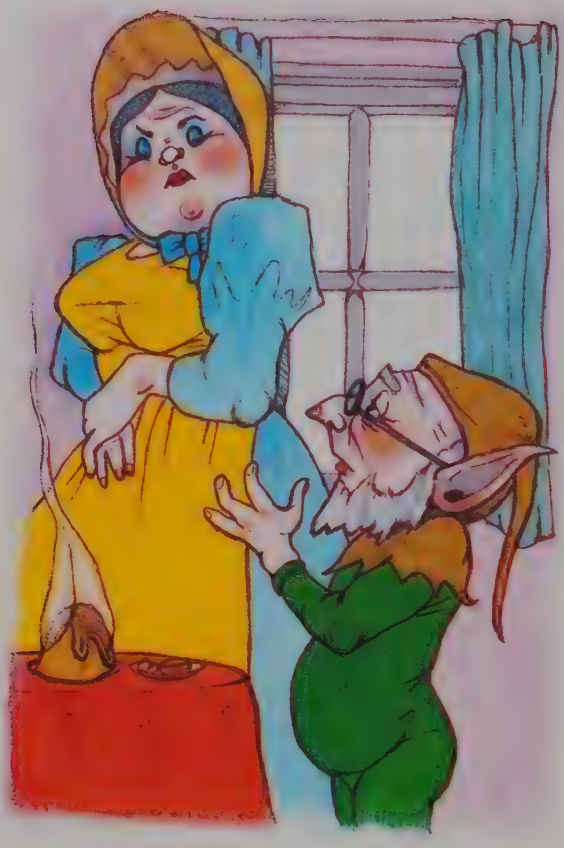
" They're young and they'll learn better," Uncle Bong kept on saying to himself. But they didn't learn better. Each time they visited him they seemed to be worse!

" I think Uncle Bong's a mingy old stingy! " said Pinch to Grab. " He never gives us enough to eat."

" He's a mingy old stingy and a stingy old mingy! " said Grab. " And he's a nasty old meanie."

" And a mean old nasty! " said Pinch. Then they both laughed and felt very clever. But Uncle Bong heard them and was sad. He told Dame Hurry-Round all about his nephews and how sad they made him.

" Well, I tell you this, they wouldn't make *me* sad, they would make me VERY ANGRY! " said Dame Hurry-Round. " You give them ginger cakes and chocolate buns and plum-pie—my word, *I'd* give them slap biscuits,



spank pudding and smack tart. That's what *I'd* give them! "

That made Uncle Bong laugh. " Well, I don't think I will be unkind to them," he said.

" And I don't want you to be either. Maybe they will learn better ways."

" And maybe they will learn worse! " said Dame Hurry-Round. " Scamps! Rogues! Rascals! They just do what they like with you! "

Now one day Uncle Bong had to go out, but he left a very nice dinner for Pinch and Grab, and he asked Dame Hurry-Round if she would mind just looking in and seeing that the two goblins were having enough to eat

" I've left them cold meat and pickles and a nice treacle pudding," he said. " It's not an enormous pudding because there are only the two goblins in for dinner to-day—but there should be enough for two big helpings each."

" I'll look round just about dinner-time," said Dame Hurry-Round, " and if I hear those two goblins grumbling . . ."

" Now promise me you won't do anything unkind," begged Uncle Bong. " Do promise me."

" Oh, I won't turn them upside down and spank them with my slipper if that's what you mean," said Dame Hurry-Round. " I'll be quite kind! "

At dinner-time Dame Hurry-Round put on her shawl and bonnet and went to see if Pinch and Grab were getting their meal all right. She heard them talking as she passed the window.

" Only cold meat and pickles ! What a lunch ! "

" And this tiny little treacle pudding! Only enough for one of us. What a mingy old meanie Uncle Bong is."

" And a mean old mingy," said Grab. " I could do with a treacle pudding five times as big as this! "

" Sh! " said Pinch. " There's Dame Hurry-Round. Be careful what you say. She doesn't like us."

" She's a silly old billy," began Grab, but he stopped because Dame Hurry-Round was now looking in at the window.

" Did I hear you say that your pudding wasn't big enough for you? " she said. " Dear, dear! What a shame! Perhaps I can do something about it for you."

Pinch and Grab looked at her in surprise. " What can you do? " asked Pinch.

" Well, I've a spell here, a Get-Big spell," said Dame Hurry-Round, and she handed them a small box. " Blow the powder out of the box over the pudding and shout ' Big, bigger, biggest! Big, bigger, biggest ' at the top of your voice. Then that little pudding will grow into the most magnificent treacle pudding you ever saw in your life."

The goblins' eyes almost fell out of their heads. What luck! Who would have thought Dame Hurry-Round would be so kind? Grab grabbed the little box. He opened it and blew the powder out all over the pudding. Then both the goblins yelled at the top of their voices.

"Big, bigger, biggest! Big, bigger, biggest!"

And that pudding began to grow. It was most astonishing to see it. It grew as big as a football in a trice. It was too big for its dish and the treacle slopped over on to the table. The goblins watched it in the greatest delight.

"What a feast we'll have!" cried Grab.

"We can have fifty helpings each!" shouted Pinch. "Look at it now—as wide as the table itself—and, oh my, look at the treacle pouring over the edge on to the floor. Mind your feet, Grab!"

The treacle swirled round Grab's feet, and he was stuck in it. Then it swirled round Pinch's ankles and he was stuck, too.

"I say, it's about big enough now, isn't it?" said Pinch, trying to wade out of the treacle. "It's simply magnificent. But really I don't want it any bigger. It's making an awful mess."

"Yes, it is. Uncle Bong won't much like trying to clear it up, will he?" said Grab. "Look out, Pinch—some of the pudding is breaking off. You'll be buried in it!"

Pinch just got out of the way in time. He looked rather alarmed.

"I say—let's have some to eat and then get out of the room," said Pinch. "Do you know how to stop it growing? I don't."

But before they could get out of the room, the pudding had grown as far as the door and the window, and the goblins couldn't squeeze past it. They were now really frightened.

"I'm covered in treacle!" said Pinch. "Get away, you horrible pudding, you!"

"It's growing over me!" cried Grab, beginning to fight the pudding. "I'm standing in it! Get back, pudding, get back! Take that—and that—and that!"

The pudding took all the blows and didn't seem to mind them at all. Pinch and Grab began to scream for help. "Help! Save us! HELP!"

Uncle Bong was coming home at that moment and he heard them. He raced to his cottage. He looked in at the window, just in time to see Pinch and Grab being quite buried by the magnificent treacle pudding!

"What's happening!" he shouted. "Pinch, Grab, what are you doing?"

"Stop the pudding from growing bigger!" shouted Grab, kicking and hitting for all he was worth, and getting more and more smothered in the treacle.

"What! Is it my treacle pudding?" said Uncle Bong in amazement, and he called out sharply:

"Small, smaller, smallest! Small, smaller, smallest!"

At once the pudding shrank back to its right size, and Pinch and Grab sank into chairs, weeping bitterly. They were in a terrible mess. So was the kitchen.

"Who did this?" said Uncle Bong sternly.

"Dame Hurry-Round," wept Pinch and Grab. "The horrid old meanie!"

" Why, she promised she wouldn't be unkind," said Uncle Bong in surprise. Just then someone touched him on the shoulder. It was Dame Hurry-Round, her eyes twinkling.

" Unkind! " she said, as if she was most astonished " *Unkind*, did you say, Bong? I heard those goblins saying how mean you were to leave them such a miserable dinner—so what did I do but give them a spell to make the pudding bigger. How was I to know they wouldn't have the sense to make it small again or stop it growing? I was as kind as I could be, and don't you dare to say anything else."

She looked so fierce that Uncle Bong didn't say a word. But her eyes still twinkled at him.

" And as for these mean, miserable little goblins, with their grumbling and fault-finding, if *they* dare to say a word, I'll not only make that pudding big again, I'll make it chase them round the village and back! And you'll please see that they clean up your kitchen for you, Bong. *Do you hear me*, Pinch and Grab? "

They certainly did. They shook like jellies when they heard her stern voice. And what a time they had clearing up that kitchen! There was treacle everywhere. Dame Hurry-Round came to see them that evening, to find out if they had cleaned up the kitchen nicely.

" Yes, you have," she said, " so you may come round to supper with me. I've a nice treat for you. You come, too, Bong dear."

In great delight the two goblins washed and put on their best suits, wondering what kind of a meal Dame Hurry-Round would have for them. She was a wonderful cook.

But, alas, when they sat down at the table, what should she bring in, hot and steaming, but a big treacle pudding! That was too much for Pinch and Grab! They turned pale and rushed straight out of the room. And they didn't come back again, either.

"What strange behaviour! " said Dame Hurry-Round, pretending to be most surprised. " Well, well—there'll be all the more for you and me, Bong. And let's hope those nephews of yours won't be quite such mean old greedies in future."

Well, I don't know about that—but I do know that neither Pinch nor Grab have ever been able to sit at a table with treacle pudding again.

" Oh dear! I quite forgot to take Granny her coat—the one I got from the cleaners for her yesterday—and I know she wants to wear it to-morrow. Margaret dear, will you go and get it and slip up the road with it? "

" Oh, *Mother* ! You know I want to finish this book! " said Margaret. " You're always telling me to do this and that for Granny. She's a nuisance."

" Margaret! How rude and unkind! " said her mother, shocked. " Philip, will *you* take the coat then? Granny's so sweet and kind to you both, surely you can do little things for her now and again."

" Oh, *bother* Granny! " said Philip, and shut his book with a slam. " You make us go and have tea with her every week, and we have to keep on doing this and . . . "

" Philip, one more word from you and I shall tell your father," said his mother, grieved and upset. " I had no idea you were not fond of Granny. I'm ashamed of you both."

Poor Granny! She heard every single word. She couldn't believe her ears. She stood on the step behind them only a yard or two away, and nobody knew she was there.

The old lady turned and went quietly away. A tear trickled down her cheek. So the children thought she was a bother! They didn't love her. She was just a nuisance. How was it she hadn't guessed that before?

She went home, leaving her news untold. She cheered up a little when she thought of George and Jane coming to live near her. Perhaps they wouldn't think she was such a nuisance. Dear, dear, she must never ask Margaret and Philip to do anything for her again. She couldn't even ask them to come to tea, now that she knew it was a bore to them. She remembered how they had refused her biscuits and home-made sweets last time. "Oh dear—to think I'm such a nuisance and didn't know it!" said poor Granny.

Well, after that Granny didn't ask Margaret and Philip for anything.

She didn't even ask them to tea each week. Mother thought it was because she was helping her other son and his wife to settle into their new home.

" I expect she's offered to have George and Jane for a bit till their parents are settled in," said Mother. " She was out when I went yesterday—gone to see how the new house was getting on. Quite an excitement for Granny."

" Jolly good thing Granny's got somebody else to fuss round," said Philip to Margaret when they were alone. " Now we needn't bother! "

So they neither of them went near Granny at all. Then one day George and Jane came to tea. At teatime they told Philip's mother that Granny was taking them to the Zoo the next day.

" We were hoping that Philip and Margaret were coming too," said Jane.

" They haven't been asked," said Mother, looking a bit puzzled. " In fact, I don't think Granny has asked them to her house, even, for quite a long time."

" We go there to tea twice a week," said Jane. "We do love it. We didn't know Granny very well before, and she's the only Granny we've got. Isn't she a darling old lady? "

" Yes, she's very kind," said Mother.

" She always makes us something exciting," said George. " Yesterday we had little gingerbread men, and on Friday she's making us jelly. And

did you know she's given us that little man who nods his head? Jane loved it so much that she made her have it."

"And she gave George a lovely spade," said Jane. "But he deserved it, Aunt, because he went and weeded her front garden beautifully. He did it for a surprise. I suppose Philip and Margaret are going to Granny's party on Saturday? It's her birthday and she's having a cake with seventy-two candles on—fancy that!"

Philip and Margaret felt more and more uncomfortable, and Mother felt more and more surprised. Why, Granny was seeing far more of George and Jane than she had ever seen of Philip and Margaret—and how very, very nicely the children talked of their Granny. No wonder she asked them so often, and gave them treats. The days went on, and Granny didn't ask Philip and Margaret to her birthday party, or even to tea, or to see her. They took her little presents, but she was out. She wrote them a little note of thanks each, but that was all.

It was a lovely birthday party, George told Philip. "There was a conjurer!" he said. "Fancy an old lady thinking of a conjurer for a party! She told us to bring two school friends and we did. Why didn't you come? Don't you like Granny? We think she's a darling."

Philip went red. He was feeling very much ashamed of himself now, and so was Margaret. They could see very well how much nicer George and Jane were to Granny than they had ever been. They had taken her kindness for

granted, had hardly ever thanked her for anything, and had been very rude.

" Well—we used to think Granny was a bit of a nuisance," said Philip, at last, seeing that George was expecting him to answer.

" Gracious! How horrid of you! She's such an old lady and she's your *Granny*! " said Jane in shocked tones. " Oh, well—it's a good thing *we* like her—we can do some of the things you don't want to do. Does she know you think she's a nuisance? I think she must know, because she never, never asks you to do anything for her now, does she ? "

" No," said Margaret. " I don't expect she loves us any more, now you've come. You're so much nicer to her." When Jane and George had gone, Philip looked at Margaret. " This is awful," he said. " I feel terribly mean. But we can't possibly start fussing round Granny again now because she'll only think it's because we're jealous of George and Jane."

" All the same, I'm going to do *something* ! " said Margaret. " I can't bear feeling mean like this. I know! Let's get up early every single

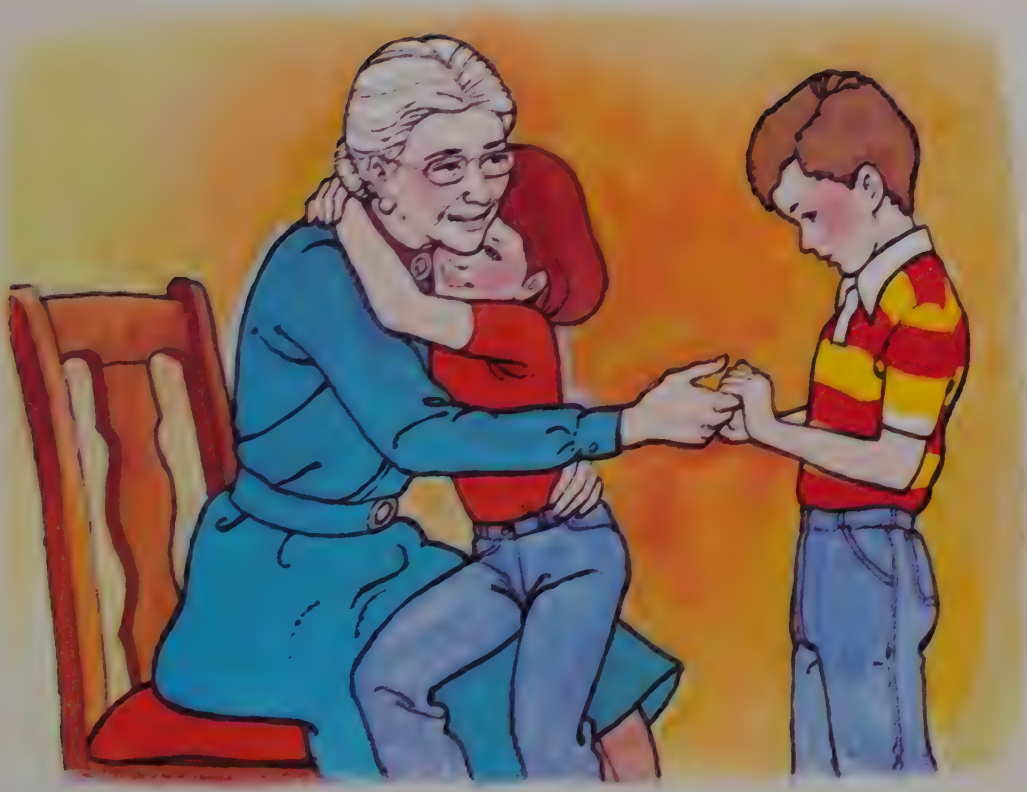
morning before Granny is up and go round to her kitchen garden and weed it ! She won't know who's done it and we won't tell her—but it will be a way of making up for being horrid."

So, every morning at seven o'clock, the two children went secretly round to Granny's. They weeded her kitchen garden really well. They didn't know that Granny, who always woke early, watched them each morning from her bedroom window.

One morning, just as they were slipping away at eight o'clock, Granny called them. They went to her, red in the face.

"Well, my dears, I've been watching you—and you're very kind—but why do you bother with an old lady who is just a nuisance ? You see, I couldn't help hearing what you both said about me one day in your garden —and I do see that I'm a nuisance to you."

" Oh, Granny, you're *not* ! It was only us that were so horrid! " said Margaret. " You're not a nuisance to George and Jane—they love you.



And you're not a nuisance to us, either. It was just that we were horrid and selfish."

"So we've been trying to make up for it—but we didn't mean you to know it was us," said Philip. "We came each morning. Can we go on coming?"

"Yes—if you will come to tea next time George and Jane come," said Granny, looking suddenly very happy. "And if you will come to the Zoo with me—and let me give you some of my new chocolate buns to taste."

"We'd *love* to!" said Margaret, giving Granny a hug. "And please, please, Granny, let *us* run your errands sometimes and not always George and Jane. We do want to as well."

So now Granny has four grandchildren she loves, and who love her. She thinks she's very lucky—but all four think they're luckier still to have such a kind, gentle old lady for a granny!

It Came Back to Him in the End

IT ALL began when Tom did a bad and foolish thing. He was sitting on the bus-stop seat with two boys, waiting for the bus to take him home.

On the other end of the seat was old Mrs. Trent, nodding her head, almost asleep, as she waited for the bus, too. Beside her was a full basket of shopping.

One of the boys nudged Tom. "I say, look—do you see what the old lady has got at the top of her basket?"

Tom looked. Mrs. Trent had bought a bar of chocolate cream for her grandson, and there it was, at the very top of the basket.

"Take it," whispered the boy to Tom. "She's asleep and she won't know. I dare you to!"

Now dares are silly, of course—they are always meant to make you do bad or dangerous things, and you have to be very brave and wise to say no.

Tom wasn't wise, nor was he brave enough to say he wouldn't take the dare. So he edged up slowly to old Mrs. Trent, hoping that the bus would come before he could do such a bad thing. Tom wasn't really bad. He just wanted to show the other boys that he was daring enough to do what they said.

He put his hand into the basket. His fingers closed over the bar of chocolate. He lifted it out gently. And then something happened.

A big dog came bounding up and knocked against him playfully. The chocolate flew out of his hand and landed on the ground. The dog pounced on it at once!

It cracked the bar in half, paper and all—and at that very moment, when the dog had the chocolate bar in his mouth, old Mrs. Trent woke up! She saw the dog eating her precious bar of chocolate and was very angry indeed.

She picked up her umbrella and began to whip the dog. Biff, biff, whack! Biff! WHACK!

The dog yelped in pain. The three boys looked on in horror. Tom was as red as a beetroot. It was all his fault that the dog was being beaten; but although he had been bold enough to do what the other boys had dared him to, he wasn't brave enough to own up. So he just watched whilst the dog was beaten.

Ah, Tom—you've started a horrid chain of happenings that will all come back to you in the end. You wait and see!

Up came the owner of the dog, a little fierce-eyed woman. "How dare you beat my dog like that! Put your umbrella down at once, I tell you! The poor creature, you've almost broken his back. It's a wonder he didn't fly at you."

"He stole a chocolate bar out of my basket!" cried Mrs. Trent. "He's a thief-dog! Taking things out of people's baskets!"

"I'm sure he never did," said the other woman, patting her dog gently. "He has never stolen anything in his life. Never! You just say you're sorry for beating my dog or I'll do something to *make* you sorry."

"I'm not apologising to a dog, so there!" said old Mrs. Trent, gathering up her things as she saw the bus coming. "And, what's more, you can't make me *feel* sorry, either!"

"Oh, can't I!" called the other woman as Mrs. Trent got on the bus. "Well, I can! You get the fish-scraps for your cat from my shop, don't you? Well, you won't get any more!"

You see, she was Mrs. Kipps, who kept the only fish-shop in the village. Every other day she packed up a nice little parcel of fish-scraps for Mrs. Trent's big tabby-cat, and Mrs. Trent fetched them. The cat loved the scraps and always waited impatiently for them to be cooked.

Mrs. Kipps turned to the three boys, who were just getting on the bus, too. "I'll teach her to say my dog steals!" she cried. "Why, she'll be saying next that *you* steal!"

That made Tom go redder than ever. He was really ashamed of himself. So were the other boys. But the thing was done, and hadn't been put right by Tom when it could have been.

Mrs. Kipps was as good as her word. She gave all her fish-scraps to Mr. Morris for his Siamese cats. There wasn't a scrap for Mrs. Trent when she called.

"I told you I'd not save you any more because you beat my dear old dog," said Mrs. Kipps firmly. "You can buy good fish for your cat from now on. Instead of two penny-worth of scraps you'll have to buy a shilling's-worth of fish."

"I can't afford it," said Mrs. Trent. "You know I can't."

"You should have thought of that before you beat my dog and called him a thief," said Mrs. Kipps. "Next customer, please."

Well, Mrs. Trent went home without her usual fish-scraps. Her tabby-cat met her at the door and was surprised not to smell fish. It mewed loudly.

"None for you today, poor puss," said Mrs. Trent. "I'll give you what tit-bits I can from my own food, but it won't be much! You'll have to do a little hunting on your own and feed yourself."

The cat waited about for the fish, but it got none because there was none to get. Mrs. Trent put down bits and pieces, but the cat was a large one and was always hungry. It grew thin and starved-looking, and hunted about in the rubbish-heaps for food.

Then it smelt at the dustbins. People put all kinds of things in there, the cat knew that. If only it could move the lids it could get into the bins and scrape about for odds and ends of food.

Well, it was a big cat and a clever one. It soon learnt how to shift the dustbin lids. Crash! They would fall to the ground and then the cat would leap nimbly into the bin and sniff about for odd scraps.

Now one day a rat came to that district. It was a big one, but rather thin, because it had not found much food the last week or two. It smelt the cat and was afraid. It hid under the floor of a garden shed one night, after it had smelt the cat around, and listened to find out where the cat lived. The rat didn't want to live anywhere near it.

And then the rat found out that the cat went round the dustbins, jerking off the lids and eating the scraps inside. The rat was pleased.

"I've never been able to move a dustbin lid," he thought. "This is grand! I'll wait till the cat leaves one dustbin and goes to the next, and then I'll pop into each one after her, as soon as she's gone, and finish up what she's left!"

Well, that is exactly what he did, and before long he became very plump and well-fed indeed. Each night he followed the cat around at a safe distance, feeding from the dustbins whose lids she had taken off.

Now the rat began to think it would be a very good idea to take a rat wife for himself and have some young rats. "I could always find plenty

of food for them in the dustbins," he thought. "Yes, I'll go and find a nice young rat and ask her to be my wife."

So very soon another rat came to join him and made a cosy nest of paper and wood shavings under the floor of the garden shed.

Ten young rats were born, all lively and strong. The big rat was pleased, and so was his wife. "Soon we shall cover this district with rats," said he. "Nobody likes us, but I don't care! As long as the cat takes off the dustbin lids for us we are all right for food."

But soon people grew tired of hearing the crash of dustbin lids in the night, and they set a watch for the cat. Mr. Wilton caught her and looked at her.

"It's Mrs. Trent's cat! She must lock it in the house at night. We can't have it taking off our dustbin lids and scraping about in the rubbish each night. It just won't do!"

So Mrs. Trent had to keep her old cat in the house at night—and there was no more crashing of dustbin lids at midnight and no more stealing of dustbin food!

And that meant that the rat couldn't find the food either! He was surprised and annoyed when he found all the dustbin lids on at night. No more scraps for him! No more tit-bits for his wife and children either.

"It's no good asking the cat why she doesn't go round the bins at night any more," he told his wife. "She would just snap me up. Cats are like that!"

"Well, you will have to go round and see what you can find," said his wife. "We've ten children now and it will be hard to feed them. Hunt well."

The rat hunted all night long, but all he found was a few crumbs of biscuit dropped by a child, and an old potato skin.

"This won't do for our large family!" said his wife. "You must do better than this! Are there no young chicks or ducklings you can find? There are often plenty at this time of year. Go to the farm and see."

Now Tom's father kept a farm not far off. Tom loved the farm. He loved all the animals on it—the horses, the cows, the sheep, the ducks, the pigs, and even the old turkeys that said "gobble, gobble" in deep voices whenever he passed.

This year he had ten little yellow ducklings of his own—dear little things a few days old, hatched out by an old mother hen. She had the ten ducklings in a coop with her and kept guard over them day and night.

And one night the rat smelt them out! He crept up and put his nose between the bars of the coop. The mother hen pecked it at once and he drew back.

"Cheep," said a duckling, and put its head out from beneath the hen's wing.

"Cluck," said the hen warningly, and the duckling drew it back. But the rat had seen it!

He went back home to his wife. "There are ducklings at the farm, with a silly hen to keep watch," he said. "I'll soon have them!"

He was sly and cunning. He found a tiny hole at the back of the coop and gnawed away at it till he had made it big enough to slip through. The mother hen did not hear anything. The rat saw a tiny webbed foot sticking out from under the hen's feathers and pounced on it. With a frightened cheep the duckling awoke—but before the hen could do anything the rat had gone off with the duckling!

He came back for another that night, and yet another. The hen clucked and squawked, but the rat was too clever for her.

Now when Tom went to see his ducklings the next day there were only seven. He was very upset. What could have happened to the others? Had a rat got them? He would move the coop to another place!

But the rat soon found out where the coop had been moved to, and a night or two later he went to the mother hen again. She was awake at once. She clucked loudly and turned herself round to peck at him.

In a trice the rat was round at the front of the coop, in between the bars, before the hen had even had time to turn herself round! He dragged out a cheeping duckling, and went back for another. He got a peck on the back, but he didn't mind that. He carried off the ducklings, and his wife was full of delight.

By the end of the week not a single duckling was left, not one. The rat had had them all. Tom went to his mother with tears in his eyes.

"There's none left now," he told her. "Oh, Mother, I do feel so miserable. They were such lovely ducklings, and I was going to let them grow into beautiful big ducks and lay eggs for me to sell. They would be my very own."

"It's a shame, Tom," said his mother.

"It's not fair," said Tom. "What have I done to have such a horrid thing happen to me? I haven't done anything at all!"

Oh, but you have, Tom! Have you forgotten when you were dared to take that bar of chocolate out of old Mrs. Trent's basket? Have you forgotten how she beat Mrs. Kipps' dog for stealing it and you didn't say a word? You didn't guess that because of that Mrs. Kipps wouldn't save her fish-scraps for Mrs. Trent's cat, and so her cat learnt to push off dustbin lids and look for scraps. You didn't know that a rat came and helped himself to scraps, too, from the dustbins and took a wife and raised a hungry family.

You didn't guess that when the cat was locked up at night and couldn't take off the dustbin lids the rat went looking somewhere else for food, and found your dear little ducklings. It was all because of something *you* did, Tom, that your ducklings were stolen and killed.

Poor Tom! I feel sorry for him, don't you? He really didn't know that one wrong deed will set a whole lot of other wrongs going round the world, and will often come back to the one who starts them. Well—I'm going to be very, very careful—aren't you? I think I'll set a good deed going, not a bad one!

The Magic that Wouldn't Stop

The goblin Big-Toes often went to help the enchanter, Mighty-One. He was very useful to him, because he was good at getting some of the things the enchanter needed for his spells. He always knew where the reddest poppies were, the biggest dewdrops and the finest spider-thread.

One day the enchanter made a curious spell. " Now, be careful not to get any of it on to yourself," he said to Big-Toes. " It's a spell to make you bigger."

" Ooh! What would happen, then, if I got some on me?" said Big-Toes.

" You'd go on growing and growing; you'd split all your clothes, you'd find your head sticking out of the roof, and you'd scare everyone into fits," said Mighty-One.

" Isn't there a word to stop the magic in the spell, then? " asked Big-Toes.

" Oh yes. If you say ' Jumping pigs ' it stops at once," said the enchanter. " But don't you try any funny tricks now, Big-Toes, because you know what a bad memory you've got. You'd only forget the word to stop the magic, and then you'd be in a fine fix! "

" Oh, I shan't use the magic spell," said Big-Toes. " I'd be afraid of growing into a giant. Now, master, what shall I do with it? "

" I want to use it this afternoon," said Mighty-One. " I want my hens to lay me bigger eggs, so I'm going to dab a little of the spell on to each one, stop the magic when it's made the hens twice as big, and then throw away the rest—just in case you should think you'd like to try it yourself."

Well, Mighty-One made his hens twice the size, and they looked very peculiar. He dabbed a little of the curious blue magic on to each hen, said: " Bigger, bigger, bigger! Bigger, bigger, bigger! " And, hey presto! they grew twice the size and had twice as loud a cluck!

" There," said the enchanter, pleased. " Now they will lay lovely big eggs—as big as a swan's! I shall enjoy them for breakfast."

" They're still growing! " said Big-Toes. " Aren't you going to make them stop ? "

" Yes. They're big enough now, I think," said Mighty-One, and he said the words that stopped them getting any bigger: " Jumping pigs! "

At once they stopped growing and began to peck about with their big beaks. The enchanter poured the rest of the spell on to the ground. It didn't make the ground grow any larger, because he didn't say " Bigger, bigger, bigger! " The spell just ran away into the earth like water.

" Wash out the bottle. We can use it again," said Mighty-One, and tossed it to Big-Toes.

But, you know, when Big-Toes came to wash it out he saw that there were two or three drops of the blue spell at the bottom of the bottle! He looked at them. What a waste to wash them away without using them!

" I think I'll take the bottle home and give Little-Toes a surprise! " thought Big-Toes. Little-Toes was his brother, who kept house for him. " There's enough of the spell to use on something. It would be fun! "

So he took the bottle home with a few drops of blue magic in it. Little-Toes was most excited when his brother showed it to him. " What shall we do with the magic? What do we want to make bigger? "

" I know!" said Big-Toes, looking at the bowl in which their goldfish, Finny, swam round and round and round. " We've often said we'll get Finny a bigger bowl, but we never have. Let's make his bowl bigger for him! He'll be so pleased. We could make it three times the size, couldn't we? "

" Oh yes. That's a very good idea," said Little-Toes, pleased. He was very fond of the goldfish. " Finny would love that. Go on, Big-Toes —use the magic and make the bowl bigger."

So Big-Toes went to the bowl with the almost-empty bottle of blue magic. He didn't like to rub the magic on with his finger in case his finger also grew bigger when he made the spell. So he tilted up the bottle for the magic to run out on to the edge of the glass bowl.

But it ran down the side of the bowl into the water! It made a little blue spot there, and Finny, thinking that it was something Big-Toes was

giving him to eat, swam up at once and gulped the little drop of blue magic into his big mouth—*just* as Big-Toes was saying: " Bigger, bigger, bigger! Bigger, bigger, bigger! "

So, of course, instead of the *bowl* growing big, Finny began to grow. The goblins were watching for the bowl to begin getting larger, so they didn't notice that the fish was growing—and then suddenly they did! They clutched one another in fright!

" The magic has got into Finny! He's growing instead of the bowl! " cried Big-Toes.

" Well, stop him quickly, then! " said Little-Toes. " He'll soon be too big for the bowl."

Big-Toes stared at Finny, opened his mouth to say the words that would stop the goldfish from growing any more—and didn't say anything at all! Instead, he went red in the face—redder and redder and redder!

And the goldfish went on growing. Little-Toes gave Big-Toes a sharp nudge. " Say the words, quick! What's the matter with you, Big-Toes? Say the words! "

" I've—I've forgotten them! " said Big-Toes. " Oh dear! "

" Oh, Big-Toes! How *dare* you use magic when you don't know how to stop it! I'm going to get the bath and fill it with water. Finny's too big for his bowl already! Do, do think of the words!" cried Little-Toes, in alarm, running to fill the tin bath with water. "What are the words like? "

" They're—they're—let me see—it's something like leaping cats—or bounding dogs," said poor Big-Toes. " Oh dear. Let me think. You think, too, Little-Toes."

" Capering goats! Springing giraffes! Fidgety elephants! Dancing hippopotamuses! Flying bears! "

" No, no—they're not right. Oh, my, look at Finny. He's as big as the bath already. *What* are the words! I'll try now! Trotting ducks! Galloping mice! Cantering hedgehogs! Scampering slugs! "

But, no—he couldn't think of the right words at all, and neither could Little-Toes. And Finny, the goldfish, went on growing.

He grew as big as the bath. He grew bigger still. He grew right out of the bath and lay gasping on the floor, an enormous, gold, shining fish. He thrashed his tail about and knocked Little-Toes right over.

" Oh, do—*do* think of the words to stop the magic," sobbed Little-Toes. " Soon Finny won't be able to breathe, because he's a fish and he can't breathe air. I'll keep pouring water over his head."

So, whilst Little-Toes poured water over Finny's head, Big-Toes kept shouting out all kinds of words that he hoped were the right ones.

" Bounding pandas! Scurrying snails! Leaping earwigs! "

But not one of them was right, of course! And poor Finny grew and grew and grew.

He grew as big as the room, and his head smashed the glass of the

window and stuck out into the garden. All the passers-by were astonished and frightened.

Finny couldn't breathe out of water, and when he saw the duck-pond not far off he thought he would try to flop over to it. So he began to thrash about with his tail to try and get out of the window. Over went the table and chairs. Down went the clock! The bookcase was smashed. The two goblins were knocked over a dozen times. They were both crying now, and they couldn't think of any other words to say at all!

Finny at last got out of the window. He bounded over the grass like a great, golden seal, knocked down the little front gate, and made his way to the pond. He went in with a splash, and began to breathe properly at last.

Now, the enchanter Mighty-One happened to be passing at the same time, and he was most amazed to see an enormous fish suddenly cross the road and disappear into the duck-pond. Then he was almost knocked down by the two goblins rushing after it.

Big-Toes saw him and caught his arm. " Please, please, Mighty-One, say the words to stop the magic that makes things grow. I've used some on Finny and he won't stop growing! Oh, please! "

" Jumping pigs! " said Mighty-One, and Finny stopped growing.

" Make him his right size, please, please do," begged Big-Toes.

But Mighty-One frowned and shook his head. "No, certainly not. See what disobedience and a bad memory have done for you! Perhaps this will teach you a lesson, Big-Toes!" And he swept on his way without another word.

So the two goblins never got back their goldfish, and had to spend a long time mending all their broken furniture. Finny still lives in the pond, and the children of the village love to feed him, and see his great golden head rise out of the water. And when they see Big-Toes hurrying down the village street what do you think they call after him? " Jumping pigs, Big-Toes! Don't forget jumping pigs!"

Nobody Liked Him

"Look—there's Mr. Ugly!" said Joan, and she nudged Fred.

"Is that his real name?" said Fred, surprised. "It does suit him, doesn't it?"

It wasn't his real name, of course, but it certainly suited the poor old man who was coming shuffling down the street. He had a very big nose, enormous shaggy eyebrows, eyes set so deep that you could hardly see them, and across one of his cheeks ran a long ugly scar that gave him a most peculiar look.

"I don't like him," said Fred. "Let's cross over to the other side of the road."

"Nobody likes him—except perhaps Madame Romano, his sister," said Joan, as they hurriedly crossed to the other side of the road. "She looks after him, and Mother says she's very kind to him. I don't like her, either—she's much too fat and she wears a wig."

"Does she really?" said Fred. "What a queer pair! I really don't like old Mr. Ugly—he looks as if he hasn't got any eyes at all, they're sunk so deep!"

None of the children liked old Mr. Ugly. Some of them were horrid to him. They called names after him, and once a boy called Daniel threw a stone at him. But the others soon stopped that. They knew that throwing stones was a cowardly thing to do.

Mr. Ugly had a very fierce temper. Once when Tom and Pat ran into him round a corner he caught hold of them and shook them just like a dog

shakes a rat! They were very frightened, especially as Mr. Ugly shouted all kinds of things in a language they didn't understand.

"It sounded as if he was yelling magic spells at us, or something!" said Pat afterwards. "Horrid old man! I hate him!"

Another time Mr. Ugly stopped little John on his way to school and asked him if he knew where a certain street was.

John was polite, and although he was half frightened of Mr. Ugly he spoke up well.

"Yes, Mr. Ugly, I know where the street is—you go down there and turn . . ."

Now he didn't mean to call the old man by his nickname Mr. Ugly, of course—he just didn't think. All the children used the name when they spoke of the old man, and some of them half thought that he had no other name. But how angry the old man was when he heard John call him Mr. Ugly!

He made a grab at him, and John just dodged in time. "Bad boy! Impolite boy! That is not my name. Ah, you children of nowadays are not like the children I once knew—how they came to me then, and how they laughed and said, 'Again, dear Uncle Koffti, again!' But you, you are horrid children; you are unkind and cruel to a poor old man. I tell you, ugly manners are worse than an ugly face! I tell you . . ."

But John didn't wait to hear any more. He darted off, scared, wondering if the old fellow was mad. What did he mean, talking about children of other days, calling himself Uncle Koffti? . . . Yes, he must be mad!

The other children laughed when John told them about all this. But his mother didn't laugh.

"John, he is almost blind and very lame," she said. "However ugly and queer he is, remember that he can hardly see anything, and can only walk very, very slowly. You are lucky—you can run faster than anyone at school, and you have eyes so sharp that you can see the highest lark in the sky."

John said no more. Mother was kind, and she was always right about things—but surely she didn't quite understand how frightening old Mr. Ugly was, with his shaggy eyebrows and his half-hidden eyes—and that queer scar across his cheek.

Now, that term all the children in the school were making presents for poor children who had no toys, or for the children in the hospital. Joan had made a rag doll that could be cuddled and felt very cosy and comfortable. Fred had made a scrap-book filled with the very nicest pictures he could find to cut out. John had made a soft woolly ball, and so had Doris. It was fun to look in the cupboard and see all the things collecting there, one by one.

"I'd like to make something for a grown-up now," said John when he had finished his ball. "Can I make something for old Kate, who cleans our school for us, Miss Brown? Do let me."

"Yes. That would be very nice," said Miss Brown, pleased. " But what will you make her?"

"I could make her a photograph frame and put a picture of all of us into it—the school photo we had this year," said John. "I know Kate would like that."

"Can I make something for a grown-up, too?" said Peter. "My father has cut some sticks from the hazel hedge, and he says he can show me how to carve the head of one and then varnish and polish the stick so that it looks like a really proper one."

"That would be a fine idea," said Miss Brown. "We'll give it to Lame Lennie, shall we?"

Lame Lennie was the gardener, and he was very nice indeed. He had lost a leg in the war, and, although he had a wooden one instead, he liked to walk with a stick

"Yes—I'll give it to Lame Lennie," said Peter.

But when the stick was finished Lame Lennie had gone away! His good leg had got something wrong with it and he was sent right away to hospital. So the stick couldn't be given to him.

"Well, now—whom can we give it to?" wondered Miss Brown. "Let's think hard."

But nobody could think of anyone to give the stick to at all. And then Miss Brown had an idea.

"I know! We'll send it to that poor old man who lives with his sister at the end of the village—I can't remember his name."

"Mr. Ugly, do you mean?" asked Joan.

"I know you call him that," said Miss Brown. "Poor old fellow! Yes, that's the man I mean. I meet him shuffling along sometimes, and I feel sorry for him. He would be so pleased to have an unexpected present like this. Don't you think so, children?"

There was no answer at all. The children looked at one another. Fancy giving a present—and such a nice one, too—to old Mr. Ugly, that bad-tempered, horrid old man! Why, Miss Brown was really quite stupid!

The teacher was surprised to get no answer. She tapped on her desk. "I'm asking you a question, children! Don't you think it would please the old man to have such a nice, unexpected present?"

"It might please him—but it wouldn't please *us* to give it to him," said Peter. "I didn't make such a nice stick to give away to somebody horrid."

Miss Brown looked shocked. "Peter! Surely you can spare a bit of kindness to a poor, half-blind old fellow even if you *do* think he's horrid!"

"All right, Miss Brown," said Peter, going red. "But—*I'm* not going to give it to him. Somebody else can!"

"I shan't! I shan't!" called the rest of the children at once.

Miss Brown looked vexed.

"Very well. We will draw for it. I will put all your names into a tin and Joan shall draw out one of them. The one whose name is drawn out will go to give the stick—and let me have no more nonsense about this, please!"

She put the names into a tin. Joan was told to go and draw one out. She picked out a bit of paper and unfolded it.

"Jennifer!" she said. "It's you, Jennifer."

Oh dear! Jennifer stared at Miss Brown in alarm. She was a quiet little mouse of a girl, and she couldn't bear to think she must go to Mr. Ugly's house and knock at the door. Suppose he answered it himself and shouted at her?

"I can't, I can't," said Jennifer.

"Don't be so silly," said Miss Brown, getting cross. "All this fuss and bother over a simple little thing! I'm glad it's you, Jennifer. It's time you stopped being such a little mouse and had to *do* something!"

Jennifer took the stick at the end of afternoon school. It had a label tied to the top of it. "This stick comes with best wishes from the schoolchildren. It was made by Peter Biggs." Jennifer didn't go to Mr. Ugly's cottage straight away. She went home first. She meant to get Josie, her doll. She wouldn't feel quite so scared if she had Josie with her. Josie never looked afraid of anything. She had a bold, bright, smiling face, and Jennifer loved her very much.

She set off with the stick in one hand and Josie under the other arm. She came to the little cottage where old Mr. Ugly lived with Madame Romano, his sister. The little garden was gay with snowdrops. Jennifer had never seen so many! She walked nervously up the little path and knocked on the door. Mr. Ugly opened it.

Jennifer suddenly lost her tongue. She held the stick out to him, but he didn't take it.

"What do you want? Can't you speak, child?" he said.

"It's—it's——" began poor Jennifer, and couldn't say another word.

"Bah!" said the old man in a most terrifying manner. Jennifer couldn't stay a minute longer. She pushed the stick into Mr. Ugly's hand and fled down the path. But, alas, she caught her foot on a stone and fell over on her face. She wasn't hurt, and picked herself up at once—and then she gave such a heart-rending cry that Mr. Ugly almost jumped out of his skin.

"Oh, Josie, you're broken! Your poor face—it's cracked in half!"

Jennifer sat down on the path and nursed her broken doll, so unhappy that she forgot all about Mr. Ugly. But the old man came hurrying out, and behind him came his plump old sister.

"What is it, my little one, what is it?" said Madame Romano. "You have hurt yourself, yes? And oh, your poor, poor doll! See, Ossie, her doll is broken!"

"Ah, the poor darling!" said Mr. Ugly, and he peered down at the doll. He took it gently out of Jennifer's arm. Madame Romano picked up the stick, which had been dropped on the path. She read the label and gave a cry of delight.

"Ossie! This little girl brought a present for you, see? A beautiful stick, oh, a wonder-stick, this is! For you, Ossie, for you. And you thought the children all hated you, my poor old ugly brother! Why, they have made this wonder-stick for *you*! "

"For me?" said her brother. "And this kind little girl came to give it to me—but she was frightened of me. And now her doll is broken. Greta, we must take her in and comfort her. We must show her *our* dolls!"

Jennifer was led indoors, still crying. And then she had a great surprise. She went into a tiny room with shelves all round it, and sitting on the shelves were dolls of all kinds and sizes—lovely dolls with carved wooden faces and with jointed arms and legs, ankles and wrists, all dressed in quaint and beautiful dresses. Jennifer stared round in astonishment.

"But—what are they?" she said "They are not like ordinary dolls."

"No, no, little one—they are puppet-dolls," said Mr. Ugly, and he took one down. Then Jennifer saw that it had strings attached to its arms and legs and head. "See, this is little Melisande—how she dances, this little Melisande!"

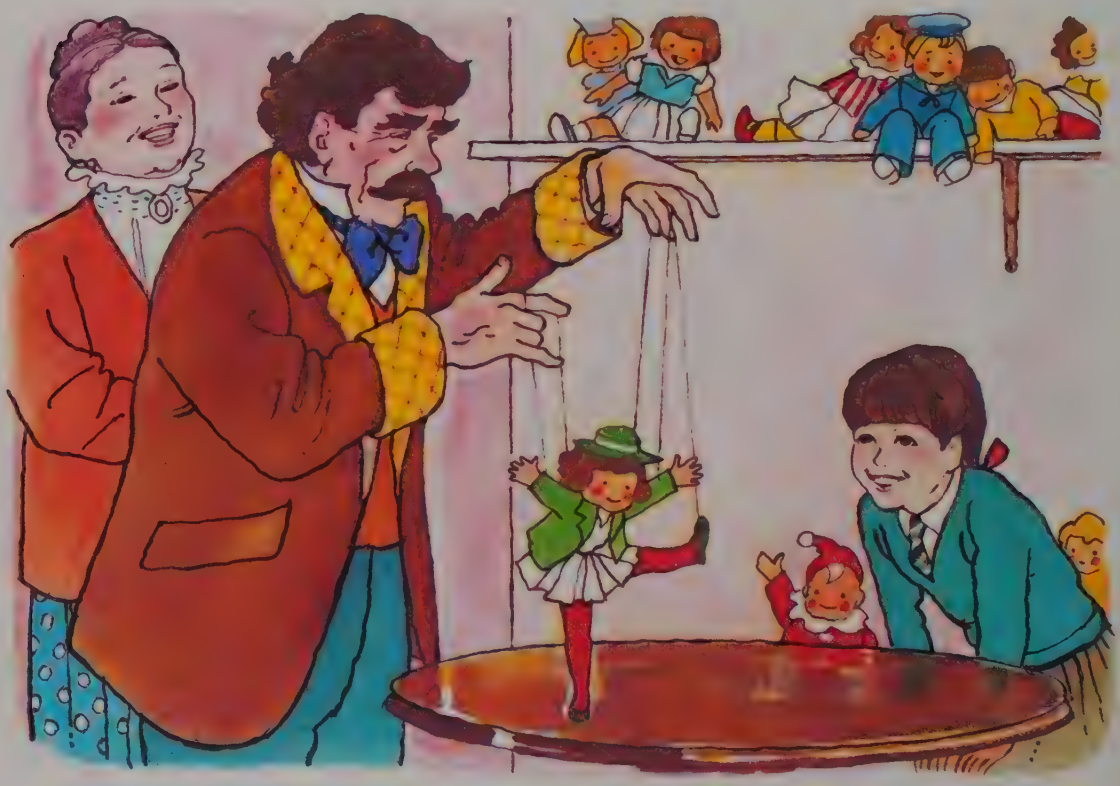
And, indeed, how the little puppet-doll danced when Mr. Ugly held her up by her strings, pulling this one and that to make the puppet dance and fling her arms about as if she was really alive!

"But—really she seems a live doll," said Jennifer in wonder. "Oh, I love her. Do the others dance, too?"

"Yes, they all dance—and they act, too," said Madame Romano, making a sailor doll do the hornpipe. "See him kick! Ah, he is a clever one, this doll."

"Where did you get them all?" asked Jennifer.

"We made them," said Mr. Ugly. "I made the dolls and my sister made the dresses. We lived in Austria, and we went round with our dolls and



made them dance to amuse the little children. Then, alas, war came, and we do not want to live anywhere but here. Now I am nearly blind, and I am old and ugly and nobody wants me, or my dolls. And yet they can dance so beautifully! But you children—you do not like such things."

"Please," said Jennifer, taking the old man's hand, "we didn't know anything about you. But oh, if only you would let us come and see your dolls—if you would make them dance and act for us—we would like them just as much as the Austrian children did. More."

"Ah—but would you like me, too?" said Mr. Ugly, and he shook his head. "Nobody likes me any more—except Greta, my sister."

Jennifer looked at him. He didn't look ugly any more. He looked kind and sad and gentle.

"*I* like you," she said. "And the others would, too. Oh, Mr. Ugly, could you bring some of your dolls one afternoon and show them to the whole school? Miss Brown would love that. Oh, do, do! "

"Now, Ossie—what fun that would be!" said his sister. "Yes, my little one, I will make him do that. He loves children, and he and his dolls should be with them. You tell your teacher we will come when she says. And see, here is a doll for you instead of your poor broken one. You shall show it to the children, and tell them soon we will come with others."

Jennifer looked down at the pretty little puppet-doll.

"Her name is Gretchen," said Madame Romano. "She is yours. And you shall take a big bunch of snowdrops for your kind teacher," said the kind old woman, hurrying into the garden, where she picked about a hundred snowdrops! "Ah, it is good to see a kind little girl like you."

"Oh, thank you," said Jennifer. " Miss Brown *will* be pleased. I'll tell her you and—and—Mr. Ugly will come. Oh dear—I mustn't call him Mr. Ugly. What's his real name?"

"You can call me Uncle Koffti," said the old man. "If you like me and are my friend you can call me what all the other children have called me—your Uncle Koffti!"

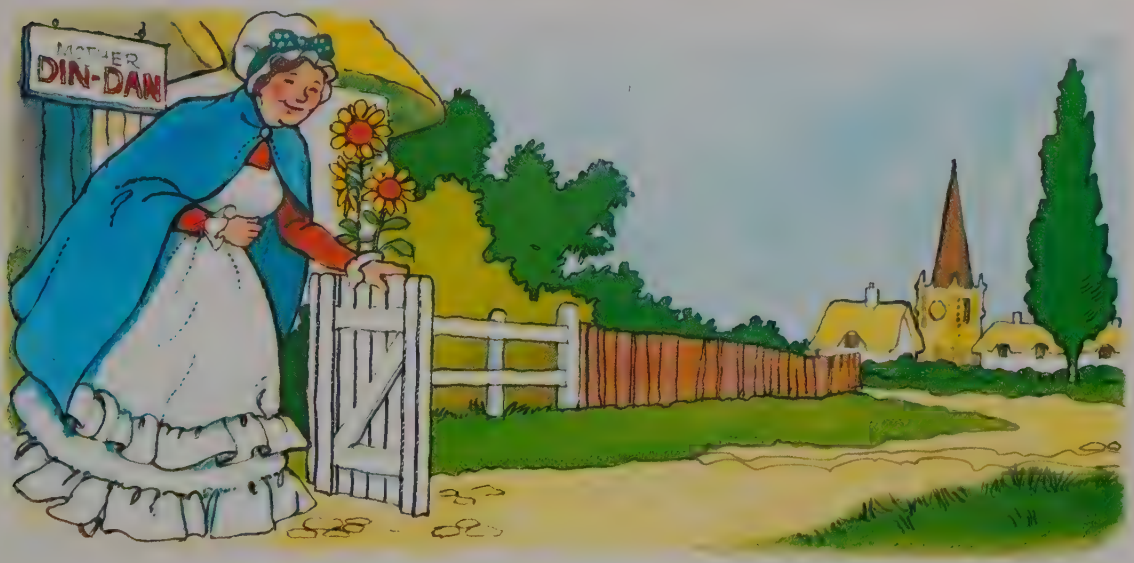
Miss Brown and the children could hardly believe Jennifer's tale next day, but they had to when she showed them the snowdrops and the lovely little puppet Gretchen. Miss Brown beamed round the class.

"We'll ask the kind old fellow and his sister to come next Wednesday afternoon—and we'll have a tea-party, shall we, and ask them to that, too! We *shall* have fun!"

"Miss Brown, I'm so glad you made us give the stick to Mr. Ugly," said Peter. "It's made him happy—and he's going to make us happy!"

He certainly is. If only I could be there on Wednesday afternoon and see Uncle Koffti make all his puppets dance and curtsey! It's really wonderful what a little bit of kindness will do, isn't it?

The Grabbit Chair



Every day old Mother Din-Dan went off to work for this one and that one. She was a kind old woman, and she didn't mind what she did. She would take Mrs. Jinky's baby out for a walk. She would look after Old Man Downy. She would shop for Dame Totter, who had a bad foot.

She used to shut her cottage door but not lock it when she went out to work. Surely nobody would rob a poor old woman !

But somebody did. *Some*body slipped in when she was out, sat in her chair, read her paper, and ate her biscuits from the tin.

Who was it? Nobody knew! Nobody saw anyone walk up the little garden path at all. But each day when Mother Din-Dan came home she saw that her paper was moved, two or three more biscuits were taken from her tin—and once she saw that the Somebody had made himself a cup of tea and hadn't even washed up the cup and saucer and teapot!

" It's too bad," said the old woman. " It really is. I've so little money for biscuits and tea—and here's somebody taking mine without asking! "

The next time, the Somebody went into the larder and ate a little jam-tart. Mother Din-Dan could have cried because she had made that for her supper when she came home very hungry. She hurried out to Mrs. Honey, the Bee-woman, who lived just across the road.

" Mrs. Honey! " she cried, " will you just keep an eye on my front gate, please, and watch who goes in when I'm out? Every day somebody slips in and sits in my chair and reads my paper and eats my food. If I find out who it is I'll hand him over to Mr. Plod, the policeman."

"I'll watch for you," promised Mrs. Honey. "And if I see the scoundrel I'll call after him, and tell him I know who it is! And I'll run around to Mr. Plod's myself and fetch him."

Well, Mrs. Honey sat at her window knitting all day long, watching for people to come down the street and turn in at Mother Din-Dan's front gate. But she didn't see anyone, though once or twice the gate swung open and back.

"Must be the wind," thought Mrs. Honey, looking up when she heard the click-click. "There's nobody gone in or out!"

But will you believe it, when Mother Din-Dan came in that day, tired out and hungry, she saw that *some*body had been sitting in her chair again, Somebody had read her paper and thrown it on to the floor, and Somebody had eaten the little meat-pie in the larder and two of her ginger biscuits from the tin on the mantelpiece. What a shame!

"Well, I tell you, Mother Din-Dan, *no*body has been into your cottage at all," said Mrs. Honey. "I sat by my window all the day and watched. Not even the postman went in."

"Then whoever it is must make himself invisible," said Mother Din-Dan. "That's it! The little pest! I wonder who it is?"

"You'll never catch anyone who's invisible," said Mrs. Honey. "Never."

"Oh, yes, I will, if it takes me all day to think out a way!" said Mother Din-Dan. So she thought very hard when she went out to work the next day, and by tea-time she had planned how to catch that wicked little thief.

She went to her old sister, Dame Sharp-Eyes, and told her all about the thief. "He's invisible, so *I* can't catch him, nor anyone else either," she said to her sister. "But your Grabbit chair can catch him, sister! The one with the arms and hands! Will you lend it to me?"

They both looked at the queer old chair in the corner.

It had once been a magic chair, but now the magic was worn out. It had curious big hands at the ends of its arms, carved in wood.

" If you'd just rub a little magic into the arms and hands," whispered Mother Din-Dan, " so that if anyone but me sits down in it the magic will work, and the hands will grab the person sitting in the chair—why, then I'll be certain to catch the thief who goes to my house every day."

" Why don't you lock the door of your cottage? " asked Dame Sharp-Eyes, who didn't very much want to lend her magic Grabbit chair.

" I haven't had a key for years," said Mother Din-Dan, " and, anyway, I want to catch the thief."

" Very well. I'll rub a little magic into the Grabbit chair's arms and hands," said Dame Sharp-Eyes. " Then if anyone but you sits in it, it will grab the person and not let him go."

So she rubbed a little yellow magic into the arms and hands of the Grabbit chair. It creaked a little and sighed. What! More work to do when it was so old!

Mother Din-Dan carried it home to her cottage. She put her own chair up in her bedroom, and stood the Grabbit chair in its place. She put soft cushions there, and then looked round to see if the thief had been along that day.

" Yes! All my little jam-tarts gone! Oh, wait till I catch him! "

The next day she set off to work as usual and the Grabbit chair was left standing on the hearth-rug. And presently the thief came in quietly at the door. He went to the larder, and a little chocolate cake lifted

itself in the air and disappeared. The invisible thief had taken it and eaten it!

Then the thief went to the Grabbit chair. He sat down and opened the paper. Now for a little read.

The magic in the chair began to work. The arms suddenly closed round the person in the chair and the hands held him tight. Oooooh!

" Let go! " squealed the thief. " Let go! Oh, what is it? "

The chair said nothing. It just held on with its hands and arms. The person in the chair wriggled and struggled, but it wasn't a bit of use. He was properly caught.

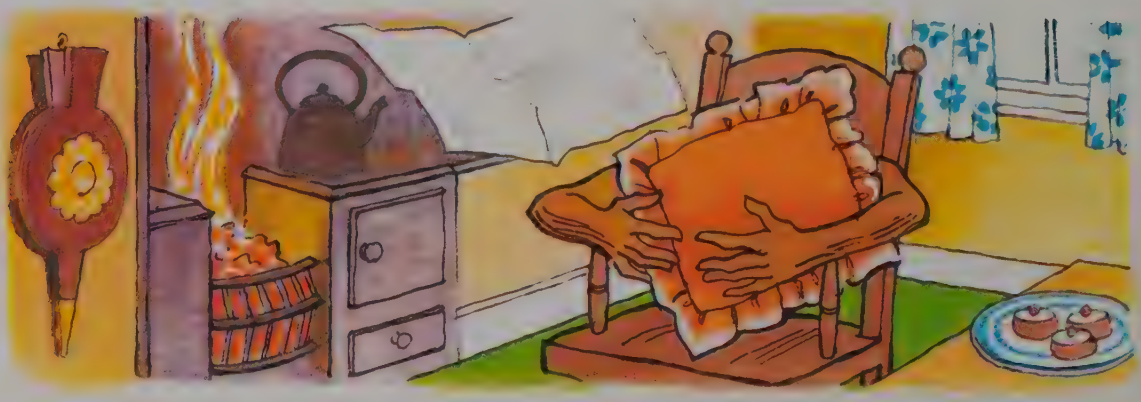
" If you don't let me go I'll get up and run out of the cottage! " said the thief, at last. " Yes, and take you with me, too! "

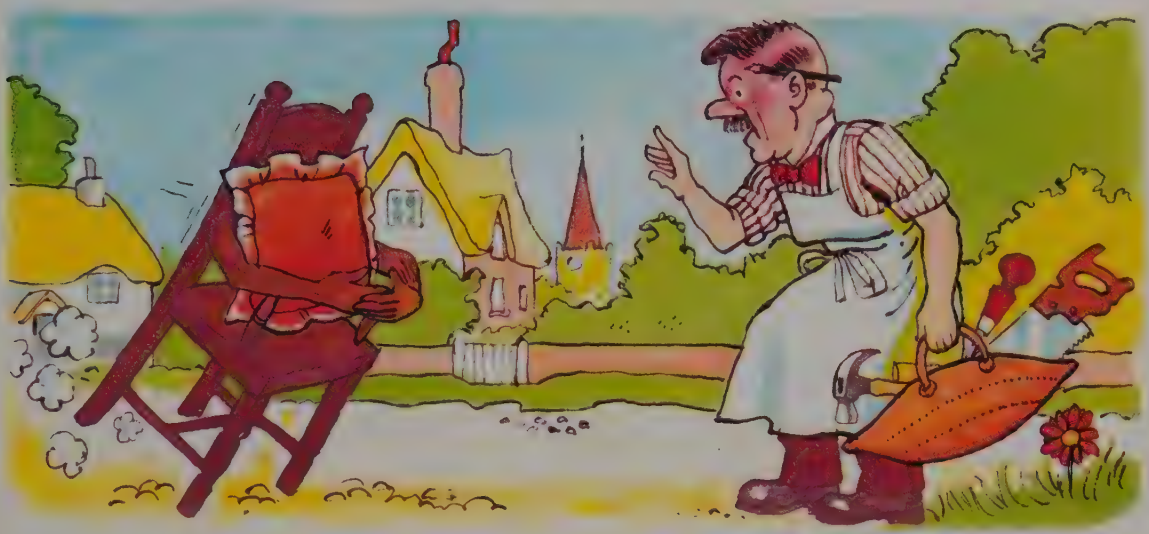
The chair didn't make a sound. It just held on. The thief stood up and the chair rocked forward, but it didn't let go. Oh no, it held on tightly because it was quite enjoying itself now.

The thief was frightened. How could he get rid of this awful chair? It would never do for Mother Din-Dan to come home and find the chair grabbing someone—and besides, the thief became visible again at night, and then everyone would know who he was!

" I'm going out of the back door," said the thief, fiercely, to the chair. " Let go! If you don't, you'll have to come with me! "

Well, the chair didn't mind that! It held on as tightly as ever. The thief staggered to the door, and the chair, holding on to him, came too, bumping along behind him. Bump-bump, bumpity-bump!





Out of the back door they went. Down the garden-path to the lane at the end of the garden. Out into the lane. And there the chair met Mr. Hammer, the carpenter.

He was most amazed to see an empty chair, with arms folded across itself, bumping along down the lane!

" Hey! Stop! Why, it's an old Grabbit chair! " he cried. " Where are you going? "

But the chair didn't stop, of course, because the thief, who was still in it, was hurrying away as fast as ever he could, dragging the chair behind him.

" I'd better hide in the wood," thought the thief. " I'll have a crowd after me if I go along like this."

So he hid in the wood until dark, and then he made his way unseen to his house at the end of the village. A very big house indeed, for the thief was no other than Mr. Bom-Bom, the mean and powerful goblin who frightened everyone in the village.

He staggered into his sitting-room and sat back in the Grabbit chair. And now he could be seen, because the magic he used to make himself invisible each day was wearing off!

What a mean-looking goblin! What cross eyes and what a disagreeable mouth! Ah, Bom-Bom, it's not a bit of good struggling! The Grabbit chair will never let go!

All night long Bom-Bom had to sit in the chair and it was very uncomfortable. When the morning came, he was very, very frightened.

"I'll have to drag this Grabbit chair behind me for the rest of my life!" he groaned. "Oh, what shall I do? Perhaps the magic will wear out and it will loosen its arms."

But it held Bom-Bom tightly all the day, and Bom-Bom got very tired indeed of dragging the heavy old chair about wherever he went.

And so, when evening came, he dragged it down to Mother Din-Dan's cottage, to beg her to use the spell that would loosen the arms. How ashamed he was! What a dreadful thing he had done, to go and rob a poor, hard-working old woman! And now everyone would know.

Mother Din-Dan was sitting in her cottage with Mr. Plod, the policeman, because she felt quite sure the thief would have to come along soon to beg her to loosen the chair's arms. And, sure enough, there was the chair, dragging up the front path.

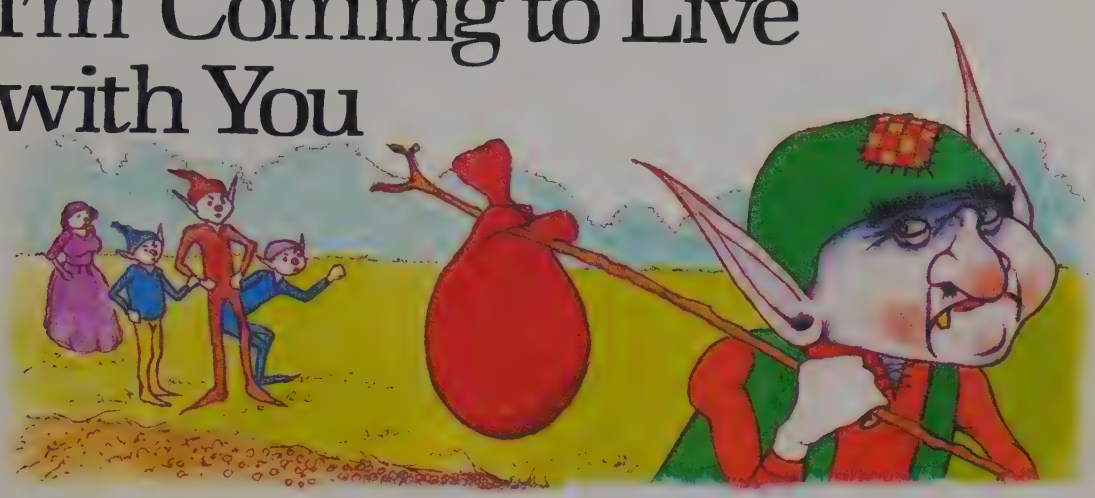
"Why! It's Mr. Bom-Bom inside it!" cried Mother Din-Dan. "Oh, shame on you, Bom-Bom! You wicked, mean old fellow! Mr. Plod, take him away and then tell the Grabbit chair to go back to my sister."

Well, Mr. Bom-Bom was hauled off to the police-station by the chair, with Mr. Plod walking beside him, chuckling. When Bom-Bom was safely in prison, the chair hopped off to Dame Sharp-Eyes, very pleased with itself.

Nobody ever walked into Mother Din-Dan's house again when she was out. As for Bom-Bom, he was so ashamed of himself that he sold his house, sent twenty pounds to Mother Din-Dan and disappeared.

People do say that there are still a few Grabbit chairs left, but they are usually only to be found in old, old shops. You'll always know a Grabbit chair by the carved wooden hands at the ends of the arms. I do hope you find one some day.

I'm Coming to Live with You



The Grumpy Goblin slammed his gate and went off down the road looking as black as thunder.

A crowd of pixies and brownies called after him. " Don't you ever come back here again! Don't you dare! We shall give your cottage to somebody else, and all your furniture—and if you show your face here again we'll turn you into a grasshopper! "

Grumpy didn't dare to answer back. He went off with big steps, a bag of belongings rolled up in a red handkerchief, and tied to a stick which he carried over his shoulder.

He had been very bad indeed. He had lived for two years in his little cottage, and each night when it was dark he had gone out and stolen things belonging to other people.

Soon his cottage was full of stolen goods. There was Witch Wimple's best arm-chair. There was Father Tick-Tock's chest-of-drawers. There was Tippitty's clock and Dame Twinkle's best teapot.

Grumpy never asked anyone to his cottage at all. He knew quite well that if he did, the folk of the village would see the things he had stolen. But one night he made a great mistake.

He stole the kettle belonging to Mother Flip-Flap. He didn't know it was a whistling kettle that she had just bought at the market. He popped it on his kitchen stove, filled with water, to make himself a pot of tea the very next day. And when it was boiling that kettle whistled its lid off!

You really should have heard it. It sounded like a train going through a tunnel, and it made everyone in the village jump in fright.

Mother Flip-Flap heard it of course—and she knew what it was. " My kettle! My stolen kettle! It's whistling! Now I shall know who the thief is! "

She ran out into the road. She soon traced the loud whistle to the Grumpy Goblin's cottage. Then she called everyone to her and they all marched to Grumpy's house and burst open the door.

Grumpy was trying to stop the kettle from whistling. When he saw the village folk marching in, he was full of horror. But it was too late to hide away the things he had stolen.

" My arm-chair! " cried Witch Wimple.

" My clock! " cried Tippitty.

" My chest-of-drawers! " cried Father Tick-Tock. " You rogue, Grumpy! You thief! You robber! "

And with that everyone fell upon Grumpy and gave him a dozen hard spankings so that he wouldn't be able to sit down for at least a week. Then they turned him out of his cottage.

And that was how it was that Grumpy was leaving the village in disgrace, with just a shirt and a pair of socks wrapped in his hanky, and not a penny in his pocket. Serves him right, too! He was very angry. He wondered if he would have to work for his living. He couldn't bear

to do that. But somehow he would have to get food to eat and a bed to sleep on. He walked on for miles and miles, wondering what to do.

And then an idea came into his head. If he could get hold of a nice, gentle brownie, who had a dear little comfortable cottage somewhere, he would go and live with him. He would frighten him dreadfully, so that he would have to take him home. And once in his home, nobody would be able to get Grumpy out. Ho-ho, that really was a very fine plan.

After a long time he came to a little village. Perhaps a gentle brownie lived somewhere near here. He would find out. Then he might have a soft, warm bed that night and a very fine meal.

He went into a little inn, just as the night was falling. There were a lot of pixies, brownies, goblins and elves there, talking and laughing together.

" Hallo, stranger," said one. " Where do you come from? "

" From a long way, to seek a friend," said Grumpy.

" What's his name? " asked a pixie.

" I can't remember," said Grumpy. " But I can tell you what he is like. He is kind and gentle and generous and he has a comfortable little cottage, soft beds and keeps a good table. Is there anyone like that living here? "

" Oh, you must mean the brownie Heyho," said a goblin. " He's the kindest fellow; and so generous. He'd give the coat off his back to anyone in trouble."

" Yes, but only if he deserved it," said an elf. " He's a good, kind fellow, but he isn't foolish. Ah, if Heyho is your friend, you'll be sure of a bed and a meal to-night, goblin! "

" He must be the one I'm seeking," said Grumpy, delighted to hear all this. " Where does he live? "

" He's gone to market," said the pixie. " But he will be passing through the wood yonder in about half an hour. He has a dear little wife who is a wonderful cook. She will be cooking him a fine dinner to-night because he has been away all day."

" This is better and better! " thought Grumpy. " A gentle, generous brownie—and a good cook for a wife! I'll go and live there without a doubt. Just the sort of home I want."

He got up. " I'll go and meet my friend Heyho," he said. " I'll wait in the wood for him. I'm sure he'll be pleased to see me. Good night, all."

The people in the inn watched him go. " Well, I wouldn't like that goblin to be a friend of mine," said the innkeeper. " He's got a nasty mean face."

" I hope he really *is* a friend of Heyho's," said an elf. " I wouldn't like him to set on Heyho and rob him."

" Heyho can look after himself all right," said the pixie. " He may be kind and gentle, but he's got brains. He's as sharp as a dozen needles."

Grumpy went to wait in the wood for Heyho. In about half an hour's time the brownie came along, humming, thinking of the good dinner that would be waiting for him. He jumped when Grumpy suddenly caught hold of him.

" Listen, Heyho! " said Grumpy. " I'm a poor goblin with no home and no food. I'm coming to live with you. I know you're kind and generous."

Heyho stopped and swung his lantern so that he could see Grumpy's face. He didn't like it. " I don't know you," he said.

" Oh, Heyho, have you forgotten your old, old friend? " said Grumpy. " Well, well, to think I should have come all this way to see you and you don't remember me! "

" I certainly don't," said Heyho. " And what is more, I don't mean to take you home with me. I don't like the look of you."

Grumpy began to frown. He caught hold of Heyho's elbow and held it so tightly that Heyho couldn't get free. " How dare you talk to me like that? I tell you I'm coming to live with you, whether you like it or not.

And if you make any trouble I've a spell here that I bought from Witch Green-Eyes to turn you into a jumping frog at the first full moon."

Heyho knew that spell and he didn't like it. He didn't like anything about this goblin either. His voice, his face, his clothes, his manner—they were all nasty. But the goblin might know some powerful spells, and he might use them. Heyho was afraid to defy him and run away.

"Well, Heyho—are you going to take me home with you?" said Grumpy. "I want to know your nice little wife. I want to know you too. I shall enjoy living in your house. Come along—lead the way."

Heyho suddenly grinned to himself. All right. He would lead the way. But it wouldn't be quite the way that Grumpy hoped.

"Well, come along," said Heyho, and swung his lantern in front of him. "We mustn't be late."

"Good," said Grumpy, and took his arm. "I knew you were sensible as well as kind."

Heyho went along through the wood. He went across a field. He climbed over a stile. He went up a hill. At the top of it was a cottage built of white stone. Lamplight shone through the red curtains. A delicious smell came out of the open window.

" Oho! So this is where you live! " said Grumpy, pleased. " Very nice, too. Do we knock? "

" Yes. Bang very loudly," said Heyho. " I'm just going to hang up my lantern. I'll be with you in a moment."

He slipped away to the side, leaving Grumpy on the door-step. But it wasn't *Heyho's* door-step. Oh no, Heyho's cottage was a mile away, near the wood! This was Mister Stamp-About's house —and Mister Stamp-About was well known to be the worst-tempered gnome that had ever lived in that district!

But Grumpy thought it was Heyho's cottage. He lifted his hand, found the knocker and rapped on it.

" Rat-a-tatta-tat! "

A cross voice called out, " Go away! " Grumpy was surprised and annoyed. He knocked again, almost breaking the knocker off.

" *Rat-a-tatta-tat!* "

" *Go away!* " barked the voice again. But Grumpy didn't. He kicked the door. He hit it with his fists—and then it occurred to him to turn the handle.

The door opened! Grumpy rushed in, eager to find the person

who had told him to go away. Aha, he would soon put him into his place, whoever he was! Some visitor of Heyho's, he supposed. He bumped into Mister Stamp-About, who had suddenly lost his temper. Mister Stamp-About caught hold of Grumpy and shook him hard. Grumpy struggled and kicked out. Stamp-About dragged him into the kitchen and sat him down hard in a chair. Then he pulled him up again and sat him down hard, and did it again and again till Grumpy hadn't any breath left at all.

"I'll teach you to come banging at my door! I'll teach you to kick my paint! I'll . . . I'll . . . I'll . . ."

The Grumpy Goblin was simply amazed at all this. Where was Heyho? Where was his nice little wife? Who was this horrible, bad-tempered fellow, as strong as an ox and as fierce as a lion?

"If you don't stop hurting me, I'll turn you into a green frog," gurgled Grumpy, at last finding his breath.

Mister Stamp-About lost a bit more of his temper.

He took some milk off the table and poured it down the goblin's neck. He plastered strawberry jam all over his face. He even emptied a cherry pie over his hair. Then he took up a rolling-pin and really set about Grumpy. But Grumpy couldn't stand any more. With a dreadful yell he rushed to the window, which was open. Stamp-About caught him by the belt, gave him a good pounding with the rolling-pin, and then threw him with all his might out of the window.

Grumpy sailed up into the air. He sailed quite a long way—and then he fell with a loud splash into the duck-pond! When he crawled out, shivering, he saw Heyho on the bank, swinging his lantern, and looking to see who it was in the pond.

" Oh, it's you," said Heyho, feeling rather upset when he saw the terrible mess that Grumpy was in. " Did Stamp-About give you a bad time? You shouldn't have banged on the door so hard. I meant you to be punished—but perhaps not quite so much as you have been. I feel quite sorry for you. Perhaps you had better come home with me for the night after all."

" Go home with you! I should think not! " cried poor Grumpy, shaking himself like a dog. " Whose house would you take me to next? No thank you! I'll find a haystack and sleep under it to-night. I'm not going to live with anyone—or even stay a night! "

And much to Heyho's relief, he went off in the darkness to find a haystack. Heyho laughed. "What a shock for him to find Mister Stamp-About in the cottage instead of my dear little wife!" he said. "Well, well—maybe he has learnt a very good lesson to-night."

Grumpy had. He's at work now—yes, and really working hard. He doesn't steal any more. He works for the innkeeper in the village, sweeping, scrubbing and gardening. But there are two people he won't even say good-day to. You can guess who they are.

Yes—Heyho, and Mister Stamp-About!

The Clever Servant

ONCE upon a time Lord Brainy wanted a servant. He wanted somebody clever, for he hated to have stupid people round him.

"I will put a notice in the paper," said Lord Brainy. "Then perhaps I shall get somebody clever." So he wrote a notice and put it into the village paper. This is what he said:

> "Wanted by Lord Brainy, a really clever servant. Call to-morrow at six o'clock."

Well, a great many people saw that notice, and wished they could get the job, for Lord Brainy was good and kind. Little Wily the Pixie saw it too, and made up his mind that *he* would get the job! But how could he prove to Lord Brainy that he was clever?

"I'm so small," sighed Wily. "And I don't look at all clever. But I am—I know I am. I would be just the right person for Lord Brainy!"

He sat and thought for a long time. His dog crept up to him and put his nose on Wily's knee. His cat rubbed against his leg, purring—but for once in a way Wily took no notice of them.

At last he jumped up and rubbed his hands. He had thought of an idea! How he hoped that it would work!

He took his watch from his pocket and went to the larder with it. He put it beside the joint of meat! How strange! But Wily knew what he was doing. Then he took off his neck-tie and folded it carefully beside the

Purrer the cat sat on his shoulder, purring into his ear. In his pocket was his watch, and round his neck was the same neck-tie that he had put in the larder the day before!

He came to Lord Brainy's house. Lord Brainy was just coming into the garden to see if anyone was going to ask for the job of servant. There were already four people waiting.

"Good evening," said Lord Brainy. "Who came first?"

Well, one by one the four people were seen and talked to by Lord Brainy, and told that he would let them know the next day

packet of kippers on the larder shelf.

His dog and cat sniffed in delight at the meat and the kippers. But Wily did not give them any. He shut the larder door tightly, and went back into the kitchen. He took his best suit and sponged and pressed it. He meant to look his very smartest when he went to see Lord Brainy the next day.

At six o'clock the next evening Wily went to Lord Brainy's big house. He took with him his faithful dog and cat. Wagger the dog walked close beside him.

whom he had chosen. Then came Wily's turn. He looked very small, not very clever, but very clean and neat.

"You won't do, I'm afraid," said Lord Brainy. "You are so small, and you don't look very clever."

"Please, sir, I am far cleverer than I look," said Wily at once. "You really wouldn't believe the things I can do!"

Lord Brainy smiled. "Well, tell me some," he said.

"Well, sir, if you hide my watch in the middle of a great big field, and don't tell me where it is, I can find it just by walking over the field!" said Wily. "You can bury it as deep as you like—I'll know when I walk over it."

Lord Brainy laughed. "I'm afraid I don't believe that," he said. "But we'll try. Give me your watch."

So Wily gave it to him. Lord Brainy didn't know that it smelt of the meat that it had lain beside all night long! He took it, locked Wily into the room, and went to bury the watch in the great field at the end of his garden.

Presently he came back, smiling. "Well, come along," he said. "It's buried somewhere in the field. Now see if you can find it just by walking over it."

Wily went out to the field. Wagger went with him, and Purrer was still on his shoulder. Wily began to walk over the field with Wagger. Up and down he went, whilst Lord Brainy watched him.

"You'll never find your watch just by doing that!" he laughed. "It's a good thing *I* know where it is, or your watch would be quite lost!"

Just then Wagger began to sniff. He smelt meat with his sharp doggy nose! Where was it? He looked all round but couldn't see it. It must be

in the ground then—but as soon as Wily saw Wagger getting excited he knew what the reason was! Wagger could smell meat—so his watch, which smelt of meat, must be just there!

"I think my watch is here!" Wily called to Lord Brainy. "I will dig and see!" Wily had a spade, so he began to dig—and at once he found his watch. He took it out of the earth and held it up to Lord Brainy.

"Well, well, well!" said Lord Brainy in the greatest astonishment. "That's the cleverest thing I ever saw!"

"Oh, I can do cleverer things than that!" said Wily. "Look, sir—here is my neck-tie. Go to that wood over there, and tie it to the branch of any tree you like. I will walk through the wood, without looking up—and when I come to the tree where you have put it, I shall stop at once!"

"Impossible!" said Lord Brainy. "I don't think *any* one could do that!" He took the neck-tie and went to the wood. He chose a thick poplar tree and hid the neck-tie there, just in *case* Wily should look up and see it.

" Now go and find it! " he said to Wily. Wily went off with Lord Brainy, and began to walk slowly through the wood. Purrer was sitting quietly on his shoulder—but suddenly the cat lifted her head and sniffed in surprise.

Kippers! She smelt kippers! But how could kippers be in a wood? Purrer knew many woods, but she had never found kippers in any of them. She felt quite excited, and sniffed hungrily.

Wily felt her getting restless, and he stopped at once. He was sure that Purrer could smell the kippery smell of his neck-tie—and that meant that it must be in the tree above. He looked up and saw a thick poplar tree.

" I think my tie is here," he said to Lord Brainy. He parted the branches, and sure enough there was his tie! He pulled it down and put it round his neck!

" Well, you certainly are the most remarkably clever pixie I've ever seen," said Lord Brainy in astonishment. " I will certainly take you for my servant."

Now Wily was a very truthful pixie, and he felt a little bit uncomfortable about his tricks, now that he had got the job and had found that Lord Brainy was so nice. He went very red and spoke humbly to his new master.

" Please, sir, I have something to say first. I am telling you the truth when I say I am clever—but I am not quite so clever as you think I am! "

" What do you mean? " asked Lord Brainy in surprise.

And then Wily told him how his dog had smelt the meat-smell of his buried watch, and how his cat had smelt the kippery neck-tie! " You see, it was they who were the clever ones, really! " he said.

" Dear me! " said Lord Brainy in surprise. " So that explains how you found your watch and your tie in such a remarkable way! Well, you quite deceived me, Wily."

" I suppose you won't want me for your servant now," said Wily dolefully.

" I want you all the more! " said Lord Brainy, with a laugh. " Your pets may be clever—but *you* had to think of the idea! And also, you are something that is even better than being clever—you are truthful! Yes, you shall certainly have the job, Wily, and you can come to me to-morrow!"

So off skipped Wily, as happy as a blackbird in spring—and now he is working happily for Lord Brainy. Wagger is there too, guarding the house, and Purrer catches all the mice. They are both paid sixpence a week, which they spend on bones and kippers!

The Wishing Wand

ONCE THERE was great excitement in Feefo Village because the Lord Chamberlain had promised wishing-wands to all the pixies and fairies.

"You have behaved very well this year," said the Chamberlain. "Every one has been kind and good, so, on the first day of spring, I will come to each house and give all of you a wishing-wand."

Now the pixies and fairies long to have a wishing-wand more than anything else in the world, because if they have a magic wand their wishes will come true. So you can imagine that every one in Feefo Village was very excited.

Most excited of all were the two pixies who lived in Corner Cottage. They hadn't always been very good, but that year they really had tried their best—and now they were to have a wishing-wand like everyone else. They *were* pleased!

When the day came for the wands to be given to each of them, the two pixies, Pickle and Goof, went out into their little front garden to enjoy the sunshine of the first day of spring. They had on their best suits, for they knew that the Lord Chamberlain would call on them before long.

They sat on the edge of their well and waited. They talked about their wands.

"I shall wish such a lot of wishes with my wand," said Pickle. "I shall wish for a pair of new shoes, to begin with. I haven't had a new pair for years, and my old ones look dreadful with this nice new suit."

"I shall wish for a new hat, with a pink feather," said Goof.

"A *pink* feather!" said Pickle. "Why a *pink* feather? Pink's an ugly colour."

"It isn't," said Goof. "It's lovely. Why, roses are pink, aren't they, and the sunset clouds? So I shall have a pink feather. And what's more, I shall wish for pink cushions in the kitchen chairs, and a pink carpet on the floor."

"Indeed you won't," said Pickle. "I won't have pink things all over my kitchen. I shall wish for blue."

"And I shall wish for a nice large brown dog," said Goof, taking no notice of Pickle. "One that will belong to me and nobody else."

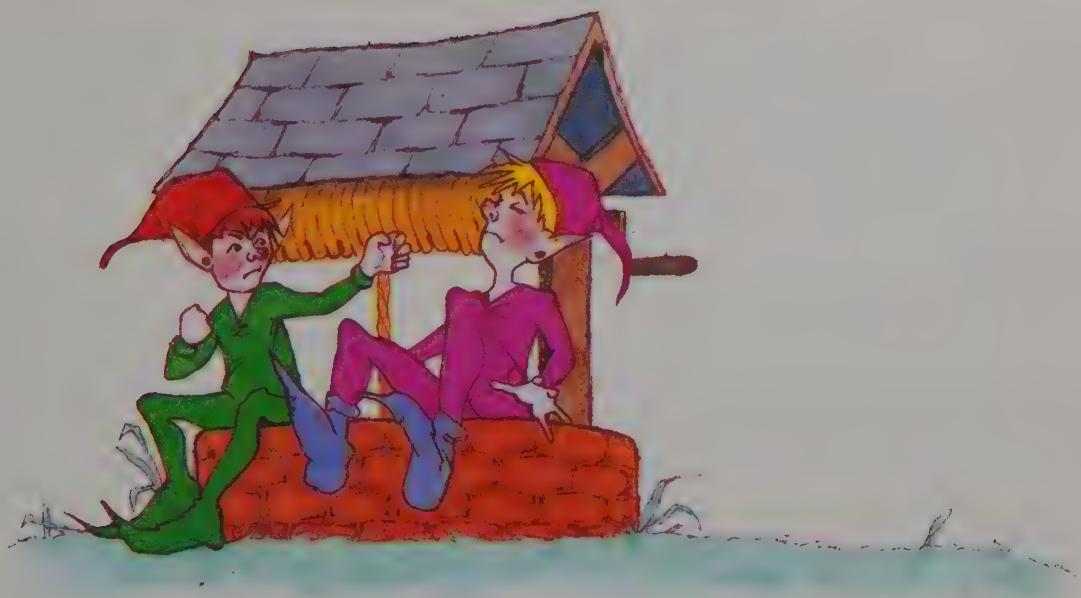
"You can't wish for a dog," said Pickle at once. "You know how we've always said we'd have a cat. Well, I want a cat, and your dog won't get on with it. I shall wish for a cat with long, long claws that will scratch your dog if you wish for one."

"Be quiet, Pickle," said Goof crossly. "I'm thinking of my wishes. My dog will eat your cat if you are so silly as to wish for one. I shall wish for a motor-car too—a yellow one with blue spots."

"How terrible!" said Pickle. "I won't be seen out in a car like that."

"Well, you needn't come out with me if you don't want to," said Goof. "I can go out with Gobo or Tinks."

"Whatever car we have *I* shall share," said Pickle crossly. "And I tell you I won't have a yellow one with blue spots. I shall wish for my own car—it shall be dark blue with red wheels."



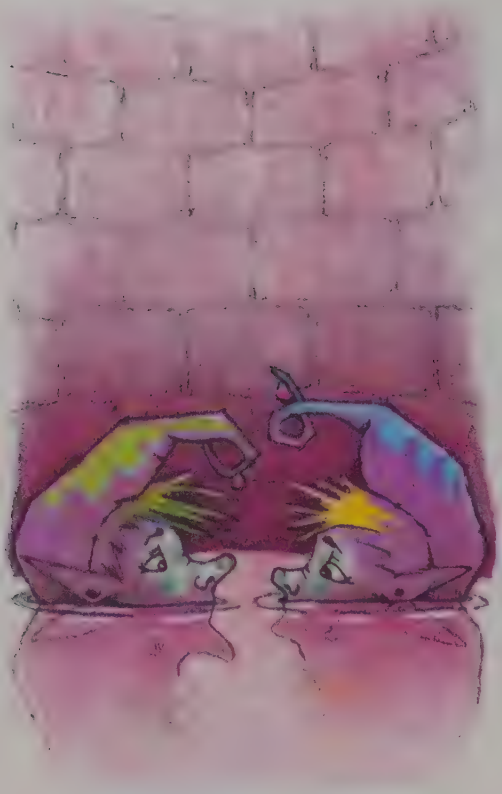
" Our garage will only take one car," said Goof. " So you'll have to put up with mine. Ha ha! "

Pickle glared at him. " Then I shall wish for another garage! " he said. " And I shall put my car in that."

" You can't wish for another garage," said Goof. " There are houses each side of us, and there's no room for one. Ha ha, again! "

" Stop ha-ha-ing at me! " said Pickle, getting really angry. " If I want another garage I shall have one. I shall wish away the houses next door, and then there will be plenty of room for a garage for my blue car."

" You wicked pixie! " cried Goof. " How dare you wish away Dame Clap's house and Mister Tibs' house! What would they do? "



" Oh, I'd wish away their houses to the hilltop over there," said Pickle. " And if you aren't careful I might wish you and your horrid dog away to the hilltop too."

" *Pickle!* " cried Goof in horror. " You wouldn't do such a thing! "

" Well, *I* don't want to live with a person who wears pink feathers and drives about in a yellow motor-car with blue spots. So there! "

" Pickle, if you aren't very careful, I shall wish you a hard spanking," said Goof solemnly. " Yes, a very hard spanking that you won't like at all."

" And who'll give me the spanking I'd like to know? " shouted Pickle angrily. " Not you, Goof, I know that! "

" Oh yes, I would," said Goof. " I can spank hard."

" You can't," said Pickle. " I wouldn't let you. I'd spank you first! "

" Oh no, you wouldn't," said Goof.

" Oh yes, I would," said Pickle.

" Oh no, you wouldn't," said Goof. " I'd get my spank in first—like that! " And he slapped Pickle hard on the arm. Pickle gave a roar of rage and smacked Goof on the chest. Goof slapped Pickle on the cheek and Pickle hit Goof so hard on the nose that poor Goof fell backwards, lost his balance—and disappeared down the well!

" Oooooh! " shrieked Pickle in fright, for he hadn't meant to push Goof down the well. He clutched at him and caught Goof's leg—but alas for Pickle! he fell over the edge too, and down they both went—down, down, down into the dark cold water at the bottom.

Splash! They hit the water, went under and bobbed up again. The well was not very deep. They could just stand—but, oh dear, how in

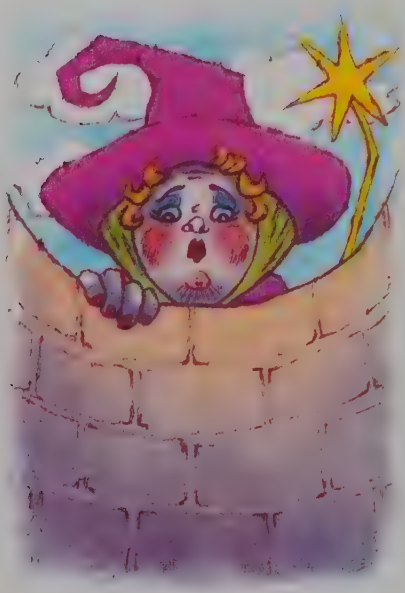
the world were they to get out again! The sides of the well were made of brick and were steep and smooth. It was no use trying to climb up.

"Let's shout!" said Goof, shivering. So they shouted, "Help! Help! We're down the well!"

But their voices were lost in the deep round well, and nobody heard.

It was a pity they had fallen down the well just at that moment, because the Lord Chamberlain came down the lane to their house, to give them their wishing-wands. He went up the path to the front door and knocked. Nobody answered, of course, because the two pixies were at the bottom of the well. The Lord Chamberlain knocked again and again. Still no answer.

"Most extraordinary," said the Chamberlain crossly. "Nobody about at all, and orders were given to everyone who wanted a wand to be at home to-day. Well, if Pickle and Goof are not at home they can't have their wands. I shall send them back to the Fairy Queen, and she can give them to someone else."



He went to the next house. He didn't hear Goof and Pickle calling and shouting. Nobody heard them at all, and it wasn't until Mother Clap came to get some water that evening, that the pixies were found.

"Oooooh!" shrieked Mother Clap, when she saw two round, white faces looking up at her out of the bottom of the well. "What's down there—what's down there?"

"It's only us," shouted Goof. "It's Goof and Pickle. We fell down. Get a ladder for us, dear Dame Clap."

"I can do something better than that for you," said Dame Clap, and she took her wishing-wand and waved it over the well. "I wish you both out here beside me."

At once Pickle and Goof flew out of the well and landed in surprise beside Dame Clap.

"Oh dear! Has everyone got their wands?" said Goof sadly.

"Every one but you," said Dame Clap. "The Chamberlain said you weren't at home this afternoon, so he has sent your wands back to the Queen. Whatever were you doing?"

"Well—er—well, we—we just fell down the well," said Goof, feeling very much ashamed. "That's all."

"Quarrelling again, I suppose!" said Dame Clap. "I thought you had given that up, and meant to behave yourselves. Well, you've lost your wishing-wands *this* year—and serve you right, if you can't be nice to one another!"

Off she went, and left Goof and Pickle alone. They looked at one another, very red in the face.

"Sorry, Goof," said Pickle in a small voice.

"Sorry, Pickle," said Goof in a smaller voice. Then, arm in arm, they went indoors to get dry. Weren't they a couple of sillies?

"Quick! Save Me!"

THERE were once five children, who always played together in the fields. Their names were John, Betty, Alan, Mary and Colin.

Colin was the smallest, and because he was not so big as the others his mother always told them to be sure and look after him well.

"Now see that he doesn't fall down," said his mother. "And don't let him climb trees. Do watch over him carefully, because he is only a little boy."

"We'll look after him, Mrs. Brown," promised the bigger children. "Come along, Colin."

Colin felt very important at having to be looked after so carefully. He thought it would be fun to pretend to be in trouble and shout for help. Then he would see all the other children rushing to his help.

So when they were not looking he slipped through a gap in the hedge and went to climb a tree. When he was half-way up he smiled to himself and began to shout for help.

"Help! Save me! Help!"

"Good gracious! That's Colin calling!" cried Mary. "Quick! He's in trouble!"

All the children squeezed through the hedge, scratching their arms and tearing their clothes.

"Quick! Save me!" shouted Colin, really enjoying himself. The children tore to the tree.

"Poor Colin!" cried Betty. "Are you hurt?"

"Save me, save me!" shouted Colin.

"He doesn't *look* hurt," said Alan. "And what did he climb a tree for? He knows his mother said he wasn't to."

The children got Colin down. "You could really have climbed down yourself," said John. "Now for goodness' sake keep with us."

The children kept a sharp eye on Colin for the rest of the morning and he couldn't slip away. But the next day he thought it would be great fun to try the same trick again. So this time he slipped off and ran to the bank of the river. He climbed down over the bank and crouched by the water. The others couldn't see him.

Then he began to shout for help. "Save me! Help! Help! Oh, save me, save me!"

The other children looked up. "My goodness, he must be in the river!" cried John. "Come on, quick!"

They tore to the river, and there they found Colin, crouching down by the bank, laughing.

"What do you mean by calling for help when there's nothing the matter?" said John, hauling Colin up the bank rather roughly. "You're just silly, the way you shout for nothing!"

Colin grinned. He really thought it was a very good joke, and he made up his mind he would play the same trick again. So the next morning off

he went and climbed to the top of a haystack. He could easily get down, but he would pretend that he couldn't. So there he lay shouting and shouting.

"Help! I'm in trouble! Come and save me! I shall fall!"

"Bother! That's Colin shouting again," said Betty, dropping her skipping-rope. "What's he doing *now*?"

All the children tore about looking for Colin. "Help! Oh, help!" he cried. At last they saw him on the haystack, and they looked at him crossly.

"What's the matter?" they said.

"I shall fall, I shall fall!" shouted Colin.

"Oh no you won't," said Mary. "We know that haystack very well—you can easily get up and down it from the other side. Get down yourself before we pull you down, you naughty, shouting boy!"

Colin slid down the other side. The other children scolded him, but he didn't mind. He was having great fun, pretending to be in trouble.

Two days later Colin slipped away again and went to hide in the farmyard. He would shout and shout from there, and the children would have to come quite a long way to find him. Good!

He crouched down behind a fence—but, oh dear, what was this? It was a large goose looking at him round the corner! "S-s-s-s-s-s!"

Then another goose came up, and another and another. Colin crouched back against the wall, very much frightened. The first goose pecked at his socks.

"Oh, don't!" cried Colin. "Don't peck me! John, Mary, come quickly!"

The other children heard him shouting, and they looked at one another and smiled. "Little silly!" John said. "He's always shouting for nothing. He's playing a trick on us again. Well, we just won't go this time."

"No, we just won't," said Mary.

So they didn't go and find Colin. He yelled and shouted and shouted and yelled, but nobody came at all. The big geese pecked his socks and pecked his shoes and one of them even pecked his handkerchief out of his pocket!

"S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s!" they said. "Cackle, cackle!"

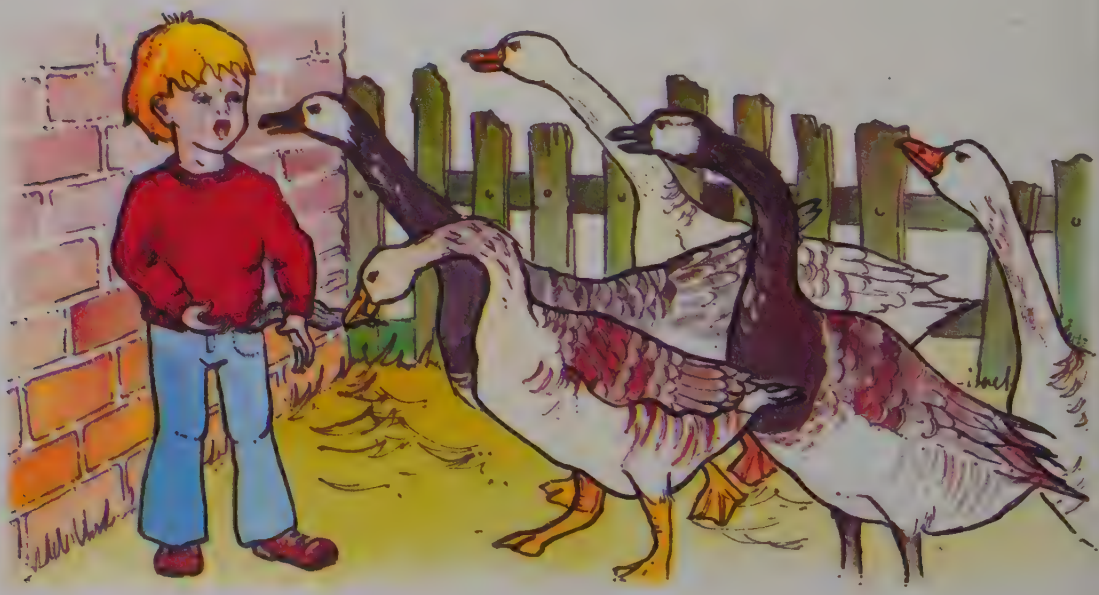
At last Colin got away from the big geese and ran sobbing and crying to the other children. They looked at him in surprise.

"What's the matter?" they said.

"The g-g-geese have p-p-pecked me to b-bits," he sobbed. "And you d-didn't come and save me."

"Well, it's your own fault, Colin," said John. "You were always shouting for nothing—and how could we tell you were *really* in trouble when you shouted this time? Just don't do it again, and we'll always come to you."

So now Colin never shouts for nothing—and wasn't his mother cross to see his spoilt shoes and socks!



The Brownie Biddle's Boots

BIDDLE THE Brownie had been gardening. It was a muddy day, and his boots were very dirty indeed. As he stamped up to the door to go in to his tea, his wife called out to him.

" Biddle! Don't you dare to come into the house with muddy boots! You take them off outside the door and bring them in when you've cleaned the mud off."

" Bother! " said Biddle to himself. He wanted to get to his tea, for he was cold and hungry. He took off his boots, and looked round for a stick to scrape off the mud. But there didn't seem to be one he could use. So he stood his muddy boots outside in the porch and went indoors.

" I can clean my boots after I've had my tea," he thought.

Now, as he was having his tea with Mrs. Biddle, who should come by but Tick and Tock, the two bad goblins. Tick saw the boots standing quietly outside Biddle's door, and he gave Tock a nudge.

" Look! Biddle's boots! I'll nip in at the gate and take them. They might fit one of us."

So, while Tock kept watch at the gate, Tick slipped in and fetched

the boots. He put them under his arm, and the two bad little creatures hurried along to the next village, where they lived.

The boots were very surprised. They belonged to Biddle, and nobody had ever worn them but him. Mrs. Biddle cleaned them but only Biddle took them about—on his feet, of course. And now two strangers were hurrying away with them. The boots didn't like it.

One of the boots whispered to the other, moving its tongue as it did so: "Where are we going? Why are we being taken away?"

"These goblins are bad," whispered back the other. "We must try to escape."

"What a funny whispering sound," said Tick to Tock. "Can you hear it?"

"Must be the wind in the trees," said Tock. One of the boots giggled a little, and the goblins felt startled. But they heard nothing more, for the boots were quite quiet after that.

The goblins soon got home. They went indoors and shut the door. They put the boots on the table and looked at them. They were fine boots, very good ones, made of strong brown leather, with stout laces and big tongues. They had nails underneath. The goblins were pleased with them.

"We'll take it in turns to wear them," said Tick. "They will keep out the wet nicely. Ho, ho! Biddle won't be foolish enough to leave his boots outside his door another time."

The goblins put the boots on a rack under the sink, meaning to clean them after tea. Tick put the kettle on. He looked at the clock. Dame Clatter was coming to tea. She would soon be here.

Dame Clatter knocked at the door and came in. She took off her cloak and sat down to tea. The boots stood quietly under the sink, watching and listening. When Tick and Tock and their visitor were drinking tea and talking the boots began to whisper:

" Aren't they nasty little creatures? "

" I can't bear the look of them. Their eyes are set too close together. Their ears are too big. Their noses are ugly."

The whispers were loud. Tick heard them and looked alarmed. Tock heard them and stared round in amazement. Dame Clatter giggled. She had always thought that the goblins had ears that were far too big.

" Who's talking? " she said. " It sounds as if it's someone over there—near the sink."

The goblins looked, but there was no one there. Only the boots stood on the rack underneath.

" Tick's got dirty hands," said the left boot, suddenly. " I shouldn't think he's washed them all day."

" And Tock's hair is like a bush," said the other boot. " I don't suppose he would know how to use a hair-brush if he had one."

This was too much for Tick and Tock. They leapt up from their chairs in great alarm. Where did these voices come from? Then Tick suddenly saw the tongue in the right boot move and he heard a voice again.

" Do you think these goblins ever clean their nails? See how black they are! "

Dame Clatter was frightened by this time. She stared all round, trying to see where the voices came from. Then she fled out of the house, leaving Tick and Tock alone.

" Tick! Do you think it's those boots? " said Tock, looking scared.

Tick nodded. " Yes," he said, " I saw one of the tongues moving. Biddle must have bought magic boots. Magic boots can use their tongues and speak, you know. They won't be any use to us, Tock. They will talk all the time we wear them. They are very rude boots, too."

The boots suddenly hopped off the rack and ran to the door. They made such a noise—tippitty-tap, tippitty-tap. The door was a little open, but Tock ran to it and slammed it.

" Don't think you are going to escape, boots! " he said, fiercely. " I'm not going to have you running off to Biddle, telling tales of us! "

" Let's throw them on the rubbish-heap and set fire to it," said Tick. " Quick—you catch one and I'll catch the other, Tock."

So the goblins ran after the boots, and there was a fine old chase all round and round the kitchen. The boots tippitty-tapped here and there, just as if someone was walking in them. It was queer to see them.

At last Tick caught the left boot and Tock caught the right one. Then holding them firmly, they ran down the garden path, threw them on the rubbish-heap, piled sticks and leaves and all kinds of rubbish on top of them, and then set light to the pile.

The flames blazed up. The bonfire crackled. The goblins watched in glee. That was the end of those annoying boots. They went indoors and poured themselves out more cups of tea.

But the boots struggled away in the rubbish-heap, kicking themselves free. They did not mean to be burnt! They were strong boots, and managed to escape before the flames reached them. They spoke angrily to one another.

" How dare those goblins try to burn us? Shall we go back to Biddle and tell him? "

" We don't know the way. We would have known it if we had walked here on somebody's feet, but we were carried. We should only lose ourselves."

" Then let's go back to Tick and Tock and make ourselves a nuisance to them."

So back they went, and soon the goblins heard a loud hammering on the door—blim-blam, blim-blam.

They looked at one another. They didn't like the sound of that knocking. It was so loud and angry. So they didn't open the door.

" Let us in! Blim-blam! Let us in! BLIM-BLAM! " cried the boots, and hammered so loudly on the door that it shook.

" They'll break the door down," said Tick in alarm, and went to open it. The boots trotted in and set themselves by the fire. The goblins stared at them in anger. What was to be done with the awful boots?

The cat came and sat down beside them, and one of the boots turned itself round and trod on her tail. The cat backed away in fright. " Sorry," said the boot. " But we want the fire to ourselves."

The goblins could not get near the fire either! When they came to warm themselves, the boots trod on their toes and made them howl.

The goblins went and whispered together in the bedroom. " We must get rid of them, we must, we must. Let's put them in Dame Clatter's rain-barrel next door."

So the boots were chased round the kitchen again, put into a sack, and hurried outside. Tick climbed over the fence and threw them into Dame Clatter's big rain-barrel. Then he went back home, grinning. " They're drowned! " he said to Tock. " Quite drowned! "

So they would have been if they hadn't made such a noise in the barrel that it woke up Dame Clatter's dog, who began to bark, and that brought the old dame out to see what was the matter.

The boots had got out of the sack and were trying to climb out of the barrel. They talked to one another and made queer gurgling sounds in the water. They splashed around, and the dog thought the water in the barrel had gone mad. So he barked and barked.

" What's the matter, what's the matter? " cried Dame Clatter, hurrying outside. She heard the noise in the rain-barrel and thought the cat must have fallen in.

" Poor puss, poor puss," she said, and lifted out of the barrel what she thought was a cat. But to her surprise and fright it was the boots. She dropped the wet things on the ground, and they stood there, shivering.

" My goodness! " said Dame Clatter. " Those magic boots again ! Well, don't you dare to come into *my* house! You go where you belong! "

She picked them up and threw them into the goblins' garden. They scampered up the path to the door, and were soon knocking loudly on it once more.

" It surely can't be those boots again! " said Tick, in a great fright. This time the goblins would *not* open the door, so the boots jumped up on to the window-sill and smashed the window. Crash! The glass fell on to the floor, and the boots hopped down.

" How *dare* you! " yelled the goblins. But the boots were so cold that they dared to do anything. They ran to the fire, tippitty-tap, and put themselves in the hearth. But the fire had gone down low, and was not very warm. So the boots climbed on to the knees of

the angry goblins and settled themselves there just as if they were brown cats! And the goblins did not dare to throw them off!

" Horrid, wet, cold uncomfortable things," said Tick, angrily. Tock winked at him. He wanted the boots to go to sleep, and then he had a plan to get rid of them once for all. So Tock said nothing more, and after a while the boots did go to sleep. They were tired with their struggle in the water. When they were fast asleep the two goblins stood up quietly, slipped out of doors, ran down the road and came to the pig-bin which stood at the corner. Here people put their bits and pieces for the pigs. It had a lid that stuck on firmly.

In a trice the boots were in the pig-bin and the lid was clapped on. " There! " said Tick. " That's the end of them! "

But it wasn't. The boots woke up at once and were disgusted to find themselves among all kinds of horrible-smelling rubbish. They jumped up against the lid and made such a noise that the village policeman, who was passing by, was really astonished. " Must be a dog got shut in the bin," he said, and took off the lid, shining his lantern into the bin as he did so. To his enormous astonishment out jumped the boots and tore off as fast as they could, clippitty-clop, tippitty-tap, covered with nasty-smelling rubbish of all kinds!

Tick and Tock had gone to bed. The boots jumped in at the broken window and looked round for the goblins. The fire was out. The cat was

out. Tick and Tock must be in the bedroom. The boots tiptoed in. Yes—the goblins were in their little beds, tucked up and fast asleep, warm and cosy.

But they soon woke up when a large, smelly cold boot pushed in beside each of them and settled down there! " Get out! " yelled Tick. " Go away ! " yelled Tock. But the boots only settled down more cosily and soon their tongues gave a gentle snore.

And now the goblins really were frightened. They didn't see how they were ever to get rid of the boots. Maybe they would have to have them all their lives long, talking rudely, clattering after them, sleeping with them. What in the world were they to do?

" We shall have to take them back to Biddle," said Tick at last. " We'll take them there and leave them quietly outside the door. Perhaps nobody will see us and nobody will ever know."

So the next morning, after a most uncomfortable night, Tick and Tock carried the sleepy boots back to Biddle's house. There was no one

about. Good! Now they could leave them in the porch and Biddle would never know who had stolen them.

But as soon as the boots knew they were near home, they got very excited. " Biddle! " they yelled. " Biddle! We're back, we're back! "

And Biddle, running out of his front door, saw his boots in the arms of Tick and Tock! " They stole us away! " panted the left boot. " They took us to their home! " shouted the right boot. Then they leapt out of the goblins' arms and raced to Biddle's feet.

He put them on and took up his stick. The goblins turned to run, but Biddle was too quick for them. He caught them both, and my word, what a lot of work that stick did! Smack, thud, biff, smack! The goblins wriggled and yelled, and the tongues of Biddle's boots cheered and shouted.

" You won't steal boots again in a hurry," said Biddle, when he had finished. " No, that you won't! "

Tick and Tock never did—they got such a fright that they kept their hands to themselves after that. And a very good thing too!

Pixie Mirrors

IN CLARA'S garden, though Clara didn't know it, lived a whole family of curly-headed pixies. They were the prettiest things, as light as thistle-down, and as merry as a blackbird in spring.

Everybody liked them. The field-mice who lived in the meadow at the bottom of the garden often asked them to tea, and the larks in the field took them to see their young ones as soon as they were out of the egg.

The meadow pixies asked them to dances, and even the cross old goblin who lived inside the hollow oak tree used to poke his head out and smile at them if he heard the flutter of their small wings going by.

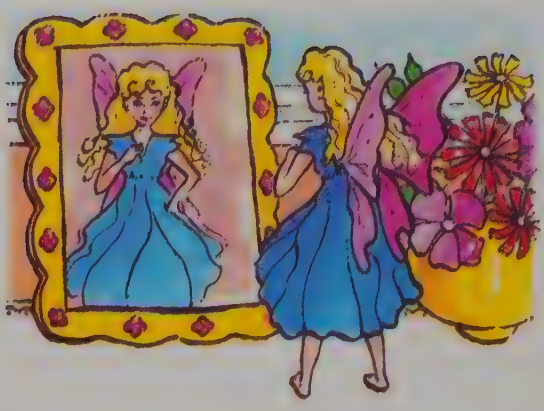
Now whenever they were asked out to a party the curly-headed pixies used to dress themselves up in their best blue-and-silver frocks, and brush out their hair till it shone like a golden mist around their small heads.

And then they used to fly to Clara's bedroom window, creep in very quietly, and go to Clara's mirror. It stood on Clara's dressing-table, and was very pretty, for it had flowers all round it.

Each pixie took her turn at looking in to see if her dress was right and her hair was neat. They patted their skirts down, and dabbed at their curly hair, chattering excitedly all the time.

And Clara never knew! She didn't guess that the pixies used her mirror for their own, though once, on a rainy night, she was very puzzled to find a whole crowd of tiny muddy footsteps on her clean white dressing-table cover!

" Can it be the cat? " she thought. " No—cats don't have such small feet, nor such pointed toes either. It's very queer."



And then one day a dreadful thing happened. Clara went to put some flowers on her dressing-table, and her hand knocked against her mirror. It fell over, slid off the dressing-table and then fell to the ground with a crash! Bits of broken glass flew round Clara's feet.

" Oh, my goodness! Look at that! " cried Clara in dismay. " My lovely, lovely mirror is broken! Mother, Mother, look what I've done! "

Mother was sad. It had been such a beautiful mirror. " Never mind," she said. " Maybe we can get a new glass fitted into it and then it will be all right again. But you have broken one or two of the flowers off too, Clara. I wonder if those can be mended."

" That's seven years' bad luck for Miss Clara," said Jane, the maid, looking in at the bedroom door.

" Don't be silly, Jane," said Mother. " Bad luck has nothing whatever to do with breaking a mirror. It's bad luck to *break* a mirror, certainly—but really, I am ashamed of you to think you are such a baby as to believe that silly old tale of seven years' bad luck! "

Jane went away, blushing. Clara swept up the broken bits of mirror and put them into the dustbin. Mother took the broken mirror to see if it could be mended.

So Clara had no mirror on her dressing-table to tell her if she was neat and tidy.

"Well, it's a good thing no one else uses the mirror but me," thought Clara.

That was just where she was wrong! The curly-headed pixies had a great disappointment when they came along that evening to see if they were looking pretty for a dance that the cross old goblin was giving especially for them. There was no mirror there!

" It's gone! " said one.

" Let's look for it! " said another.

But that wasn't any good, because it just wasn't anywhere in the room at all. The pixies were so busy looking for it that they didn't hear Clara come into the room—and the little girl stood staring in surprise and joy at the twelve tiny pixies flying all round her bedroom!

" Am I dreaming? " she cried. " Or are you real? "

The pixies flew together in a bunch, looking round in fright. Then one of them spoke.

"We are real, of course," she said. "We were looking for your mirror, Clara. We always came to peep in it before we went to a party. But now it's gone."

" It's broken," said Clara sadly. " Did you badly want to see yourselves, Pixies? There is a long mirror in my mother's room. You can peep into that if you like."

" No, thank you," said the pixies at once. "We shouldn't really have let *you* see us, Clara—we would get into trouble if we let a grown-up see us. Oh dear—what are we to do? There is no pond in your garden to look into."

"Shall I tell you something?" said Clara suddenly. "Well, listen. This afternoon when I went down the garden, it had been raining. And as I passed by the lupin plants, I saw such a pretty sight. One of the lupin leaves had curved its pretty green leaflets upwards, and had caught a bright raindrop just in the middle! I am sure you could find it and use it for a mirror!"

"That *is* an idea!" cried the pixies in delight. "We'll go and find it straight away, Clara."

They flew out of the window. They went to where the big blue and pink lupins grew. They had pretty leaves, cut up into green fingers—and sure enough, in the centre of one was a bright raindrop, just big enough to make a little mirror for the curly-headed pixies! One by one they looked into it, and patted their hair and arranged their dresses. It was just right for them!

Then a pixie knocked against the lupin leaf and the raindrop rolled out and splashed on to the ground. The little lupin mirror was broken!

But it didn't matter. The pixies had finished with it, and went off gaily to their dance. They had a lovely time, and told every one about the funny little mirror they had found in the lupins.

Clara's mirror was mended and was put back on her dressing-table; but the pixies never used it again, though they often remembered Clara and dropped fresh flowers on to her pillow for her to find.

They asked the lupin leaves to hold the raindrops for them, whenever it rained—and that is just what they do. They make beautiful mirrors for the little folk, and are simply lovely to see. You won't forget to look for them, will you, after a rain-shower? You will find those pixie-mirrors gleaming brightly here and there, in the centre of the lupin leaves. Roll one out and see it break on the bed below!

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